

Researcher looks at recovery after injury beyond mere survival in humanitarian aid settings

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Beyond surviving after an injury comes living. To what extent a person is able to return to the life and independence previously enjoyed is an important aspect of recovery and rehabilitation is often a crucial factor in that. Nonetheless, it is a factor often overlooked in humanitarian settings and it is an area where more research is needed. Bérangère Gohy's Ph.D. thesis looks beyond survival, to how recovery is measured and what the patients' road to regained independence looks like.

Belgian physiotherapist Bérangère Gohy has worked with the humanitarian aid organizations Humanity & Inclusion and Médecins sans Frontières in settings ranging from the civil war-torn Ivory Coast to Afghanistan and the Syrian border. Her role was often to provide early post-operative rehabilitation and support patients' recovery both in hospital and in out-patient post-care.

Using data and research to make issues in humanitarian settings more visible

Working in humanitarian aid projects made her aware of how the focus on saving life and limbs, which of course is vital, sometimes made what comes after less visible. The road to recovery, which is important to all patients, has another dimension in humanitarian settings, where patients are often young, the support system weaker and the need to regain abilities to provide for one's family and ensure survival great.

Bérangère saw how data and research can help make these issues more visible, to support interventions and back-up arguments in advocacy work, both in [clinical setting](#) and to a general audience, and so began her road to a Ph.D.

Already established connections between Médecins sans Frontières and the research group Global Disaster Medicine, at the Department of

Global Public Health, facilitated her decision to do her Ph.D. work at KI and the Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society.

How patients recover and how physiotherapy is provided

Bérangère's Ph.D. first looks at how to measure recovery in a humanitarian setting. The measure that was developed and used was especially adapted and tested to be useful in different humanitarian settings. It then moves to also look at how the patient moves on from injury, to regain independence and abilities, reviewing what physiotherapy is provided and how.

These things are often overlooked and not documented in humanitarian settings, which Bérangère also wants to highlight with her thesis. Misconceptions, such as a misguided fear that early physiotherapy delays recovery or that physiotherapy is seen not as a [preventive measure](#), but as an afterthought when issues arise, creates obstacles to its timely implementation in humanitarian settings.

The first step on the road to continued research

After defending her Ph.D. Bérangère will go back to her job at Humanity & Inclusion, where she now has a new role that will allow her to also continue doing research.

"My Ph.D. was a journey and is also the beginning of further research. I want to continue conducting research in humanitarian settings, because I clearly see the added value it has when it comes to how strategies for care are developed and to improve how interventions are carried out," says Bérangère.

She hopes her work will have an impact on both the local level, in projects in humanitarian settings, and to add support to what is already known about the importance of physiotherapy especially in humanitarian settings.

More information: Independence in activities after injury in humanitarian settings : assessment, change over time and associated factors. openarchive.ki.se/xmlui/handle/10616/48848

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