

Health Effects of 9/11 Are Still a Threat

By: Kenton Chan

On September 11, 2001, at 8:46 am a tragedy struck in New York City but it was not just only in New York City but across the nation. News reports in New York City at first thought that it was an accident that an airplane crashed into one of the twin towers. However, seven minutes later another plane crashed into the other tower underscoring the sad truth that the nation declared it a terrorist attack.

The collapse of the towers caused a massive fire which led the cause to a lot of people trying to escape. Along with the fire, there was a huge amount of smoke and there was debris that filled the air as the towers began to crumble. Many front-line workers and people working in the towers lost their lives on this day. Along with the lasting fears of 9/11 in 2001, it also came with prolonged health effects that need more attention by providing more funding to research and treatments.

After this traumatic event, many first responders and survivors began to experience health issues that were not visible at first. As time passed, symptoms caused by the collapse of the towers began to arise. These problems include cancer, respiratory problems, pneumonia, and other chronic illnesses that are connected to exposure to debris, smoke, dust, and other substances that are harmful to the human body when the towers collapse. According to *20 Years Later: The Lingering Health Effects of 9/11* by Karen Selby, “An estimated 410,000 first responders, cleanup crews and survivors spent days and weeks breathing in air heavy with toxins from 400 tons of crushed concrete, glass and asbestos at Ground Zero.” The types of chemicals contained within these toxins consist of chlorine and inhaling too much of it can cause negative health effects to the human body.

From *Health Effects of 9/11 Still Plague Responders and Survivors* by Tara Haelle it stated that around 74% of the responders that were enrolled in the WTC Health Program were diagnosed with at least a physical or mental health problem that is directly connected to the exposure of 9/11 with 20% with cancer and 28% with a mental condition. Although 28% of people enrolled in the WTC Health Program are diagnosed with a mental condition, it still shows that people are suffering from mental conditions because of 9/11, and from this data not every responder has enrolled in the WTC Health Program which shows that there might be more responders that are experiencing through it.

But aside from there being toxins in the air during the collapses which affected health issues, there were also emotional damages that took a toll on people. “Sixteen years after the World Trade Center attacks, Julie, who I call mama, was diagnosed with Stage 4 ovarian cancer, one of the medical conditions said to result from 9/11-related toxin.” (Petrow-Cohen) From a young age, Petrow-Cohen had to experience/witness her school being shut down due to the collapse of the tower, and growing up she had to endure the pain of having to see her moms diagnosed with cancer one after another that was caused by the effects of 9/11.

In a recent interview with my friend, Min Li Lin, I asked her about the life that her grandpa had experienced around September 11 while still new to the city. She explained to me that her grandpa had recently moved to New York City from Victoria, Texas after traveling back to China for her uncle’s wedding in 2000. Her grandpa wanted to New York City so that he was able to immigrate his family to the United States after leaving his family behind for so many years in hopes of providing more opportunities for his children and grandkids. When her grandpa first moved to New York City, he was settling in and finding a job, and taking English classes to prepare for the citizenship test while living minutes away from the Twin Towers.

Yet little did Min Li's grandpa know his life would go downhill when the terrorist attack happened. Now Min Li's grandpa has recently been diagnosed with pneumonia due to the effects of 9/11 and is still hospitalized. Although my friend did not experience 9/11 the way Petrow-Cohen did, it is still devastating to see close family members having to suffer from something they did not do or ask for, especially having to withstand all the hardships that someone has been through.

Furthermore, the health effects of 9/11 are affecting people economically because, with all of the mental and physical problems they face trying to find treatments for it, the medical bills continue to rack up. "The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated that aim, and it has taken its own toll on 9/11 survivors." (Haelle) With COVID-19 on the rise, it limits jobs for people which makes people that are suffering from the long-term health effects of 9/11 and their families have a hard time providing money for the cost of these medical bills. In addition, if anything sudden happens to them during this period of time hospital spaces are also limited since it is prioritized for people that have severe cases of COVID-19. Moreover, people who are old or have respiratory problems are more prone to catching COVID-19, and attracting COVID-19 would mean that those who already have respiratory problems or any type of health problems, their symptoms would get worse. So in order to combat these issues of money, the government should provide more healthcare and funding to people with health issues linked to the effects of 9/11.

These problems continue to persist because not many people know that they are able to register for programs that can subsidize their medical expenses. "Although the program does not collect information on cause of death, some health officials believe many died from Sept. 11-related illnesses — and that the toll is in fact higher, given the likelihood that many people have died who were not enrolled in the program and did not know their illness was Sept.

11-related.” (Swift and Corey) So in order to really make sure that everyone has the proper care they can get, the government should make sure that everyone that was near Ground Zero should be registered in the WTC Health Registry. If not they should reach out to the people and their families that were to get them enrolled. Additionally, more funding should be applied to science and research to help predict how long it would take for the effects of 9/11 to severely impact someone and what treatments can be taken to prevent it from happening to those who are near Ground Zero but have not been affected yet.

The effects of 9/11 have continued to be a horror in the lives of people who lived through it. But along with this fear, there are also long-lasting health effects that come with it. So to combat this issue, the government should provide more funding to those affected by 9/11. More research can be done to understand the types of symptoms and effects so that the proper treatments can be made to prevent conditions from those who have it from worsening. In addition, there is still a lot in which the general public can be educated, especially about the long-term health effects. By spreading awareness to the public, it allows people to be more aware that health issues that are caused by the effects of 9/11 are a real thing.

But things that can be done now to help contribute to helping those who are suffering from the effects of 9/11 are by establishing specialized healthcare facilities that are specific to treating conditions that are related to 9/11. Furthermore, this helps to ensure that victims are being provided with the best care possible to treat them.

Another way that the public can be more involved in helping out with this is by informing those they know who have been affected by the effects of 9/11 to enroll in programs that might help them. In addition, the government can also provide funding to local communities in New York City which provide support groups or mental health services that allow people to have a

safe space to talk about their experiences with each other while seeking help. By taking these measures it would help to provide the best care possible for those struggling and trying to overcome the effects of 9/11.

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