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EPI

Judging Dept.

Steffany Cavallo

Student

EPI/BIOSTAT

2

Rebecca Hoen and Matthew Mauer

Dept or Program Years in program

Mentor

A Survey Health Effects in NYS Employees who Responded to the World Trade Center Disaster, Six Years Post-9/11

Author (s)

Steffany Cavallo, Rebecca Hoen MS, Matthew Mauer DO MPH

Background: Following the World Trade Center disaster of 9/11/2001, approximately 4500 New York State (NYS) employees responded to the disaster site to assist in the recovery efforts. Many were exposed to potentially hazardous levels of dust and smoke. In an effort to assess the potential health effects resulting from these exposures, the Bureau of Occupational Health (BOH) has conducted numerous studies to assess health outcomes in this population. In June 2007, BOH conducted a survey of NYS responders who had not previously participated in these studies.

Objective: To determine if the demographics, exposures, and prevalence of selected psychological and respiratory symptoms are similar between the prior study participants and those who had not previously participated.

Methods: Descriptive analysis of demographic data, self-reported exposures, and health outcomes was conducted using SAS 9.0 statistical software. Results were compared to previous studies using chi-square bivariate analysis.

Results: The respondents (n = 439) were compared to prior study participants who completed all previous surveys (n = 461). The prevalence of reported symptoms and diagnoses appeared to be lower in the present survey population. Additionally, those from the present study were less likely to report working in a high exposure area (p = 0.0004) than the prior study participants.

Conclusions: These findings suggest that while this newly surveyed population reported less respiratory and psychological symptoms and diagnoses, they were also less exposed.