6S 2022 Sketch Groups Template
Staccato Project Design

TITLE
The Climate of Medicine: Assessing Climate Readiness amongst rural healthcare workers in India

RESEARCHER/S

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ABSTRACT, INTELLECTUAL MERIT, BROAD IMPACT

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OVERVIEW / RESEARCH QUESTIONS
- How do healthcare workers in rural India assess the impact of climate change on the health of their patients? In what vernaculars (scientific, local cultural idioms) are these challenges described in? What acts of translation are required of them?
- Is the current healthcare setup sufficiently equipped to deal with heat related health hazards?
- What inputs can the government provide to enhance healthcare workers' ability to treat heat risks?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE
- The ongoing climate emergency is a public health challenge- increase in global temperatures is an environmental and occupational hazard - The risk of heat-related mortality increases with natural aging, but persons with particular social and/or physical vulnerability are also at risk
- South asia particularly susceptible to heat-related hazards to health - wet bulb temperatures rising rapidly; over 60% of workforce in agriculture, in rural areas
- Government divestment from health as a social good
- Rural healthcare workers - few and far between, underpaid and without adequate gear

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Critical environmental anthropology with a focus on how environmental risks impact bodies (in both corporeal, physiological, biomedical, affective and emotional ways)
- Public health - medical anthropology
- Knowledge production and practices in postcolonial contexts

METHODS AND DATA RESOURCES
Survey - basic questionnaire to gauge health workers understanding of heat related health hazards
Participant observation during consultations or home visits
Could also do focus groups with them if I want to discuss a particular theme in greater depth
Patient interviews - who work outdoors, in the heat

THEORETICAL FRAMES & DATA ANALYSIS

- Political ecology of health
- Environmental justice
- Anthropology of development

PLAN OF WORK

I'll select a geographic region that is affected by heat stress and choose to set up my research in two-three villages
One year ethnographic research
Will work with NGOs to develop a toolkit that offers guidance to a) health workers to make sure they are meeting the needs of their patients; b) govt officials - on how they can make healthcare more climate ready; c) patients - to understand and recognize heat related symptoms (to be done with trained doctors) - these can be made in regional languages with the help of community leaders

CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Maintaining confidentiality of medical records
- Not offering any therapeutic benefits to patients or health workers - thinking about how to be helpful to overworked professionals and not making myself a cumbersome intrusion
- Making sure that disclosures by healthcare workers criticizing state and local level officials stay private

VALIDITY AND EVALUATION

- Run regular checks on data to see how enquiry is shaping, checking data for inconsistencies, tweaking research questions and interests accordingly
- Looking for comparable case studies to see how my data speaks to their conclusions

PREPARATION AND WORK THUS FAR

- Course work in STS and political ecology
- Training in anthropological/qualitative methods
- Prior experience in running interviews
- Native speaker

REFERENCES

1. .Acharya, Payel, Bethany Boggess, and Kai Zhang. 2018. "Assessing Heat Stress and Health among Construction Workers in a Changing Climate: A Review" International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 15, no. 2: 247. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15020247

2. Hans A. Baer (2008) Toward a Critical Anthropology on the Impact of Global Warming on Health and Human Societies, Medical Anthropology, 27:1, 2-8, DOI: 10.1080/01459740701831369
3. Elizabeth Cartwright (2019) The Medical Anthropology of Climate Change: Eco-Risks and the Body Environmental, Medical Anthropology, 38:5, 436-439, DOI: 10.1080/01459740.2019.1621866
4. Heat Stress and Public Health: A Critical Review. R. Sari Kovats and Shakoor Hajat. Annual Review of Public Health 2008 29:1, 41-55

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

-   Interview responses (written transcripts + audio recordings) will be de identified and stored on a secure cloud server, only accessible to me and my supervisor
-   They will be destroyed after study is complete
-   Survey results and responses (after anonymisation) may be shared as a dataset (will have to look at the appropriate place for them)

FURTHER NOTES

-   An interesting question raised in one of the articles I read was how does biomedicine itself as an industry exacerbate health hazards - so then the idea is not only to capacitate medical workers but also to consider the environmental impacts of the healthcare industry that nowadays requires intensive resource use