

Tropic cyclones on the rise in low- and middle- income countries but remain least studied of climate-related events

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A new invited perspective from a paper from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health illustrates the increases in adverse

public health outcomes following tropical cyclones, especially in communities with existing health conditions. The paper, published in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, explains that the focus should be on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), rather than the United States. Until now a majority of research on outcomes from tropical cyclones have centered on high income countries.

"In order to more fully understand the long-term consequences of [tropical cyclones](#) more high-quality [public health research](#) on tropical cyclones that focuses on LMICs is essential," says Robbie M. Parks, Ph.D., incoming assistant professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia Mailman School. "However, conducting this research calls for a multidisciplinary approach as well as greater cooperation between high income countries and low- [middle-income countries](#)."

The public health impact of tropical cyclones reaches beyond injuries and cardiovascular diseases but extends to neuropsychiatric conditions, respiratory diseases, and infectious and parasitic diseases which are all evident following these weather situations. Parks and co-author Renzo R. Guinto of St. Luke's Medical Centre College of Medicine, Philippines, further make the point that long-term mental health consequences are greatly misunderstood and need to be studied in greater detail.

Recovery is often inequitable after a tropical cyclone affecting the federal aid and private insurance made available to black and low-income populations. Even [financial resources](#) and the luxury of evacuation—due to a lack of warning systems—are not available to all, Parks observes.

"It is almost too painful to read the news stories every time a powerful tropical cyclone makes landfall; we are all regularly reminded that typhoons and hurricanes are some of the most deadly and frequent climate-related hazards there are. For those of us not directly affected by

extreme weather, it is much too easy to move on with our lives once the headlines fade. However, the long shadow of a tropical cyclone can destroy lives and result in hospitalization and death."

More information: Robbie M. Parks et al, Invited perspective: Uncovering the hidden burden of tropical cyclones on public health locally and worldwide, *Environmental Health Perspectives* (2022). [DOI: 10.1289/EHP11252](https://doi.org/10.1289/EHP11252)

Provided by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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