



**The Psychiatric Association of Turkey (PAT) Activities for the February 6, 2023
Earthquakes - 13 February, 2023**

We are trying to cope with the aftermath of one of the biggest disasters that our country has experienced. We started working from the first day of the earthquake and shared with you what was done in the first days (<https://psikiyatri.org.tr/TPDData/Uploads/files/InformationonPATsActivitiesRegardingthe.pdf>). We would like to share the activities we carried out last week under the coordination of the Executive Committee and PAT Disaster Preparedness and Intervention Unit.

Urgently needed documents containing information on earthquake and mental health aimed at educating the public were prepared swiftly. These were added to the "Earthquake and Mental Health" tab created on the association's website and distributed to relevant parties. The page continues to be updated with newly prepared documents (https://psikiyatri.org.tr/menu/229/Demprem_ve_Ruh_Sagligi).

On February 8th at 21:00, a meeting was held with the PAT sections, task forces and regional branch managements. Information was shared, and ideas were exchanged about strategies pertaining February 6th Earthquakes.

Trainings under PAT Earthquake and Mental Health Education Program, which was created expeditiously, were held between February 9th and 12th. On the first day; "Early Period Psychological Impact and Psychological First Aid After Earthquake" (Instructor: Münevver Hacıoğlu Yıldırım), "Principles of Mental Assessment in Those Affected by Earthquake" (Instructor: Ayşe Devrim Başterzi), and "Principles of Early Period Drug Treatment After Earthquake" (Instructor: İrem Yıldız) were covered. On the second day, the topics of "How to Evaluate Disasters and Their Effects: Psychosocial Intervention Principles from Evaluation to Implementation from a Psychiatrist's Perspective" (Instructor: Ejder Akgün Yıldırım), "Increasing Initial Counseling Skills" (Instructor: Şahika Yüksel), "Understanding, Making Sense of, and Approaching the Mind After Disasters"



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(Instructor: Tamer Aker) were presented. The third day's topics were allocated to topics on children and adolescents. Moderated by Önder Küçük, they included: "Psychological First Aid in Children" (Instructor: Bengi Semerci), "Early Period Psychological Symptoms and Interventions in Trauma in Children" (Instructor: Süleyman Çakıroğlu), and "Systematic Approach to Child Mental Health After Earthquake "(Instructor: Yankı Yazgan). On the last day of the trainings, topics on "Importance of Keeping Records in Mass Trauma and Disasters from a Forensic Psychiatry Perspective" (Instructor: Mustafa Sercan), "Delivering Bad News in Crisis Times" (Instructor: Burcu Rahşan Erim), and "Protection from Burnout in Mass Traumas" (Instructor: İlker Küçükparlak) were discussed. Broadcasted live on Zoom and YouTube, the daily trainings were attended by nearly two thousand participants who showed great interest in the Q&A sections. You can access the training videos from this link:

[https://psikiyatri.org.tr/menu/231/deprem ve Ruh sagligi Egitimleri](https://psikiyatri.org.tr/menu/231/deprem-ve-Ruh-sagligi-Egitimleri).

We created a WhatsApp network with our colleagues who remained in the affected region and designated coordinators for each WhatsApp group. This network was used in determining needs for mental health services and medicine, as well as coordinating our colleagues and tracking movements of the people in the area. Through these WhatsApp groups, we also collected intelligence from colleagues who were forced to continue their daily duties despite their injuries and difficulty to find shelter. We contacted the relevant universities' rectors, deanships, and chief physician offices in an effort to assign colleagues who were on administrative leave and needed to move. In collaboration with both their institutions and the Ministry of Health, we accounted for their accommodation and basic needs. We created an opinion report belonging to our association on this matter and shared our law firm's evaluation regarding employee rights and administrative obligations (<https://psikiyatri.org.tr/3701/deprem-bolgesinde-hizmet-vermeye-zorlanan-saglik-calisanlari-hakkinda>).



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Building on our experience with remote support lines established in the past, we have started preparations for an online platform aimed at providing psychosocial support. The technical infrastructure of the platform, created based on our association's website, has been completed and will primarily be used for health workers in the region after the final checks.

We played a role in reactivating the Ankara Psychosocial Support Network (PSDA). Ankara PSDA started its activities under the umbrella of the Ankara Medical Chamber, Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Association, Women's Solidarity Foundation, Health and Social Service Workers Union, Social Service Specialists Association, Psychologists Association for Social Solidarity, Turkish Psychologists Association, Turkish Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Psychiatric Association of Turkey. Planning for PSDA activities in Istanbul and Izmir was made with the management of the Medical Chambers and PAT branches in those cities.

We started working on developing a model for doctors and healthcare workers who served in the areas affected by the earthquake, returned to their own cities, and needed face-to-face psychological support.

We called for an urgent meeting of the main organizations to create a strategic plan for the Ministry of Family and Social Services, which is responsible for psychosocial support services in disaster areas. This plan includes early, middle, and late-term intervention and rehabilitation programs that will last for a year.

We called for volunteers among our members to serve in the regions affected by the earthquake. With the cooperation of the Ministry of Health and our association, we formed a volunteer pool consisting of more than 600 colleagues who will work in the region for a limited time, in a rotating manner. In addition to the cooperation of the Ministry of Health, our first volunteers also arrived in Kahramanmaraş and Antakya on February 13th.



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Our field team, consisting of our association's President Dr. Ejder Akgün Yıldırım, PAT AHMB member Dr. Hamid Boztaş, and Dr. Özgür Öner, started fieldwork as of February 12, despite ongoing logistical constraints. Evaluation reports will be shared with the public and relevant official institutions as soon as possible.

We have started working on establishing a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Unit in the region, starting with Antakya as our first center.

Our coordination and cooperation efforts with the municipality, official institutions, and professional associations serving in the region continue in the field.

We know that we will overcome these hard times together with solidarity.

The Psychiatric Association of Turkey Executive Committee