Joint longitudinal and survival models: associations between natural disasters exposure, disability and death

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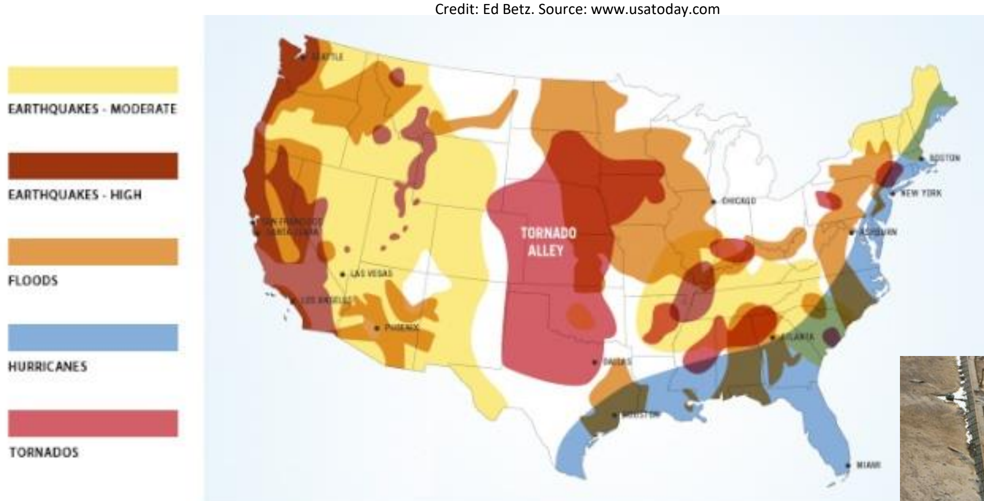
Credit: Ed Betz. Source: www.usatoday.com

Source: www.flickr.com/photos/kevharb/4199300356/in/photostream

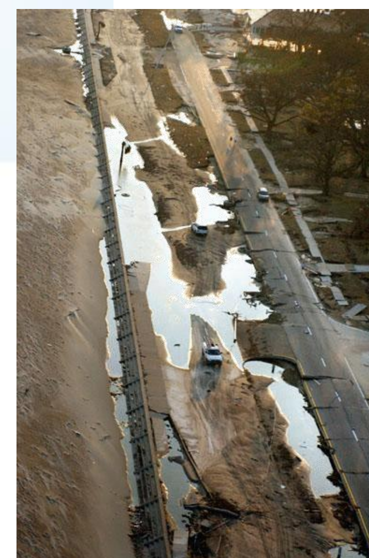
Credit: Steve Craven. Source: http://mercymedical.org



Source: www.noaa.gov

Source: http://www.theaustralian.com.au

Source: www.vanwinkle.org/biloxi.html



Source: www.vanwinkle.org/biloxi.html

Research question

Is natural disaster exposure associated with either individual-level changes in disability or the risk of death?

Source: http://www.theaustralian.com.au

Source: www.vanwinkle.org/biloxi.html

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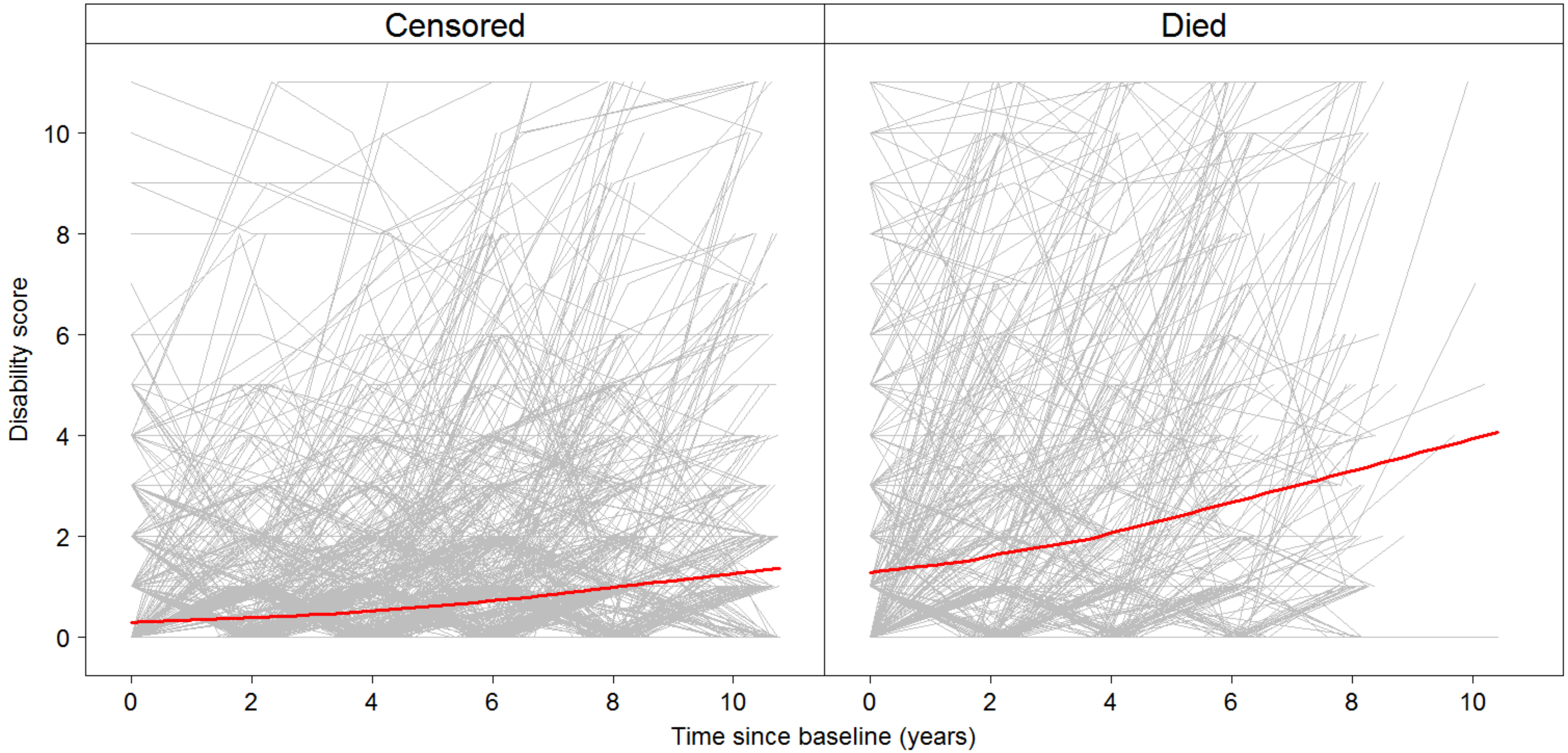
Data sources	U.S. Health and Retirement Study U.S. Medicare (deaths) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) database
Sample	17,559 participants, aged 50 to 90 years
Study period	1st Jan 2000 – 30th Nov 2010
Outcomes	Disability score (discrete, range from 0 to 11) Time to death or censoring
Exposure	Occurrence of a natural disaster within the previous 2 years (binary, time-varying)
Covariates	Baseline demographics (age, gender, race, wealth)



Observed disability score trajectories (and lowess smoothed average)
for 2,458 individuals aged 70 to 75 years

Joint model formulation

Longitudinal submodel (for disability score)

$y_i(t_{ij})$ is disability score for individual i at time point t_{ij}

$$y_i(t_{ij}) \sim NegBin(\mu_i(t_{ij}), \phi)$$

$$\eta_i(t_{ij}) = \log\left(\mu_i(t_{ij})\right) = \boldsymbol{x}_i'(t_{ij})\boldsymbol{\beta} + b_{1i} + b_{2i}t_{ij}$$

Covariates $\boldsymbol{x}_i(t_{ij})$: natural disaster exposure, time (linear slope), age category, age category * time interaction, gender, race, wealth decile (categorical)

Survival submodel (for time-to-death)

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t)\exp\left(\boldsymbol{w}_i'(t)\boldsymbol{\gamma} + \alpha_1\eta_i(t) + \alpha_2\frac{d\eta_i(t)}{dt}\right)$$

Covariates $\boldsymbol{w}_i(t)$: natural disaster exposure, age category, gender, race, wealth decile (linear trend), age category * wealth interaction

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Covariates $\boldsymbol{w}_{\boldsymbol{i}}(t)$: natural disaster exposure, age category, gender, race, wealth decile (linear trend), age category * wealth interaction

Joint model estimation

Bayesian approach, most flexible

Various software options, e.g.

- JMbayes package in R
  - Random walk Metropolis algorithm
  - Penalised splines for baseline hazard
  - Long run times for a large dataset:
    17,559 patients → 11 hours (for 26,000 MCMC iterations)!
- Stan (called from R using RStan)
  - Hamiltonian Monte Carlo algorithm
  - Encountered problems with the sampler getting stuck when using a large dataset

	Disability score ratios
Constant	0.02 (0.02 to 0.03)
Time (years)	1.02 (1.01 to 1.04)
Age category (ref: ≥50, <60y)	
≥60, <65y	0.92 (0.81 to 1.03)
⋮	⋮
≥80, <85y	5.62 (4.89 to 6.51)
≥85, <90y	9. 51 (7.96 to 11.34)
Age category * time interaction	
≥60, <65y	1.05 (1.03 to 1.06)
⋮	⋮
≥80, <85y	1.29 (1.26 to 1.32)
≥85, <90y	1.28 (1.25 to 1.32)
Gender (ref: Male)	
Female	1.02 (0.95 to 1.09)
Race (ref: White or Caucasian)	
Black or African American	1.30 (1.17 to 1.45)
Other	1.15 (0.95 to 1.39)
Wealth (ref: Decile 1, most wealth)	
Decile 2	1.10 (0.92 to 1.29)
⋮	⋮
Decile 9	5.31 (4.54 to 6.23)
Decile 10, least wealth	9.60 (8.22 to 11.24)
Disaster exposure	
Within previous 2 years	0.99 (0.92 to 1.04)

Older age → higher baseline disability

Older age → faster rate of increase

Non-white → higher average disability

Less wealth → higher average disability

No evidence that disaster exposure is associated with disability!

	Hazard ratios
Age category (ref: ≥50, <60y)	
≥60, <65y	2.54 (1.05 to 6.16)
⋮	⋮
≥80, <85y	7.76 (3.31 to 17.03)
≥85, <90y	10.08 (3.81 to 23.71)
Gender (ref: Male)	
Female	0.61 (0.53 to 0.68)
Race (ref: White or Caucasian)	
Black or African American	0.90 (0.72 to 1.11)
Other	0.75 (0.46 to 1.15)
Wealth trend across deciles	
Linear trend (0 = Decile 1; 9 = Decile 10)	1.15 (1.01 to 1.28)
Age category * wealth trend interaction	
≥60, <65y	0.92 (0.81 to 1.06)
⋮	⋮
≥80, <85y	0.89 (0.78 to 1.01)
≥85, <90y	0.87 (0.76 to 1.00)
Disaster exposure	
Within previous 21 days	0.94 (0.56 to 1.43)
Within previous 2 years, but not 21 days	1.02 (0.87 to 1.18)
Association parameter	
Current value of linear predictor	1.54 (1.41 to 1.66)
Current slope of linear predictor	1.62 (0.93 to 2.81)

Older age → higher hazard

Males → higher hazard

White/Caucasian → higher hazard

Less wealth → higher hazard

But effect of wealth diminishes with age

No evidence that disaster exposure is associated with death!

Natural disasters are common!

Disaster type	Number of individuals experiencing this disaster type at least once (%)	Number of person-disaster events (%)
Storm	12944 (74%)	28894 (45.2%)
Hurricane	6415 (37%)	16090 (25.2%)
Snow	5496 (31%)	10436 (16.3%)
Fire	3229 (18%)	4291 (6.7%)
Flood	1083 (6%)	1294 (2.0%)
Tornado	662 (4%)	662 (1.0%)
Earthquake	259 (1%)	259 (0.4%)
Other	1943 (11%)	1943 (3.0%)
All disasters	16075 (92%)	63869 (100%)

Notes: The 'storm' category includes severe storm, severe ice storm or coastal storm. The 'other' category includes dam/levee break, freezing, terrorist or not otherwise specified. The percentages shown are: % of total individuals (left column) and % of total person-disaster events (right column).

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Older age → higher hazard

Female → smaller hazard

Non-white → smaller hazard

Less wealth → higher hazard

But effect of wealth diminishes with age

No evidence that disaster exposure is associated with death!

"A one unit increase in the estimated log disability score is associated with a 54% increase in the hazard of death"

or

"A doubling in the estimated disability score is associated with a 35% increase in the hazard of death‡"

‡ Since a doubling in disability score is equivalent to a 0.693 unit increase in log disability score (i.e., log(2) = 0.693)

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or

"A doubling in the estimated disability score is associated with a 35% increase in the hazard of death‡"

‡ Since a doubling in disability score is equivalent to a 0.693 unit increase in log disability score (i.e., log(2) = 0.693)

"A one unit per year increase in the rate of change in estimated log disability score is associated with a 62% increase in the hazard of death"

or

"A doubling in the rate of change in estimated disability score is associated with a 40% increase in the hazard of death"

Association parameter	
Current value of linear predictor	1.54 (1.41 to 1.66)
Current slope of linear predictor	1.62 (0.93 to 2.81)

Conclusions

Able to estimate the effect of disaster exposure on disability, **even in the presence of non-random dropout** due to death

- i.e., disability data which was missing not at random (MNAR)

Able to estimate the effect of disaster exposure on death, **conditional on an individual's underlying level of disability**

Able to quantify the association between disability and death in a (hopefully!) meaningful way