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The term “complex disaster” and the debate on a qualitative shift in the disaster landscape has become more prominent in the general discourse of disaster management and response (1).

One challenge that has been underlined in these debates is the lack of openly available standardized high-quality data on disasters. This data is needed to better understand the dynamics of complex disasters, create improved risk assessment models, enable benchmarking and eventually improve disaster responses to complex disasters (2).

One suggestion to advance data quality is the use of disaster registries.

The research team at the Institute for Emergency Medicine at the University Hospital Schleswig-Holstein recently developed the online registry KatMedReg as part of the research project QUARZ-SAND. The registry is a national quality management system for medical disaster response units during mass casualty incidents. In the future, this registry will not only enable the electronic evaluation of missions and simulation exercises, but also help benchmarking and comparing different responses and response units to improve the overall medical disaster response outcome.

Other disaster registries were established in the past, such as the national Israeli DISAST-CIR (3) or the consensus based international Major Incident Reporting template (4), which does not seem to operate anymore.

Despite these national and international efforts, no common standard has been set regarding disaster data collection. Agreeing on a standard way of collecting data and establishing an international open access disaster registry could be one way of improving data quality and thus form the basis for improved risk assessment modelling and a better understanding of complex disasters.

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Complex Disasters as Future Challenge for Disaster Research and Management