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**Health, Illness and Health Care Use Analysis of Flood Affected Farm Families of Rural  
Canada: Some Fundamental Issues and a Cautionary Example**

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**Abstract:**

It is no secret that the frequency and impacts of floods is on a rise worldwide, and so are the issues of health, illness and health care use. Canada is not immune to this hydrological disaster trend and its impact on people's lives, including their health. This paper explores how flood-affected farm families in rural Canada understand health and illness, and also their health care use practices. The analysis is based on a case study of feedlot farm families undertaken after the 2005 flood in semi-arid southern Alberta, Canada. This region experienced unprecedented flood events in the province's history, damaging over C\$2 billion worth of infrastructures, businesses, personal and community properties. A vast majority of feedlot farm families interviewed did not experience physical health problems during the 2005 floods, but all experienced some form of emotional and psychological health problems. These families, however, did not seek help of health services despite their negative psychological health experiences. The feedlot farm families' health care use during the 2005 floods is framed within the health promotion and biomedical approaches of the contemporary health and health care frameworks. The former looks at health as a complete state of physical, mental, social, financial and spiritual well-being, while the latter focuses on the absence of disease or illness. Moreover, the biomedical model casts the flood affected individuals as helpless victims who need to come under the authority of health service providers in order to protect their health. In contrast, the health promotion model enables the individuals to increase control over their own health and attempt to improve it. This "integrated surveillance health approach" adopted by feedlot farm families to evaluate flood-related illnesses clearly shows the consequences it had on their use of local health professionals and their services in 2005. The paper concludes with a cautionary note about the possible risk of this integrated surveillance health approach used by feedlot farm families in rural Canada.

*Keywords:* Floods, Rural Canada, Farm Families, Health, Biomedical, Health promotion.