GET YOUR GO BAG: DEPLOYING OR VOLUNTEERING TO HELP IN DISASTERS

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DISCLOSURE

Walter Fava has no actual or potential conflict of interest, nor does he have any relevant financial interests associated with this presentation.
PHARMACIST AND TECHNICIAN
OBJECTIVES

- Describe typical requirements for deployment or travel to a disaster-stricken area
- List common concerns and challenges once you arrive to help
- Identify ways to get and stay involved in disaster preparedness

IMPORTANCE

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) website, this year alone, there have been 27 named hurricanes, of which, there were

- 10 named Atlantic storms in September alone, five of which were active on September 14,
- The first time since 1971 to have so many storms active simultaneously
• There have been over 800 confirmed tornadoes in the US in 2020

• Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced in California, Washington, Oregon, and Colorado due to wildfires

CHALLENGES OF DISASTER RELIEF WORK

Responders will be challenged

• Physically
• Mentally
• Emotionally
• Spiritually
WHAT DID I SIGN UP FOR?

Disaster relief work is
• Heroic
• Ugly
• Dangerous

AM I UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

• Think about whether you are up for the challenge and whether your lifestyle and job will accommodate volunteering for disaster relief work
  • Personal health concerns
  • Family concerns
  • Employer concerns
AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION QUESTION 1

• What type of natural disaster has happened most often in the US in 2020?
  • A. Earthquakes
  • B. Hurricanes
  • C. Tornados

REQUIREMENTS

• Appropriate training, equipment and resources
• Good physical shape to endure long hours and lack of sleep
• Mentally and emotionally well balanced
• Focused on providing healthcare services in the midst of extreme conditions
• Ability to work independently and as part of a team
• Patience
• Have a ‘This is not about me’ attitude
TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, & RESOURCES

• Volunteering through organizations and agencies which provide disaster relief services will give you the following
  
  o Access to the appropriate training
  o Equipment
  o Resources you may need

TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, & RESOURCES (CONT.)

Training will include

• Didactic modules
• Group drills
• Exercises to ‘practice’ responding to a natural disaster
• Familiarizing volunteers with the equipment and tools at their disposal during a disaster relief effort such as navigating the drug cache
TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, & RESOURCES (CONT.)

Disaster relief organizations will also provide you a list of climate/season appropriate clothing to pack in your Go Bag as well as other essentials

• Your ‘Go Bag’ is the luggage you have packed ahead of time so you can leave on short notice
• Use a duffle bag on wheels to accommodate easier transport

ADDITIONAL GO BAG TIPS

• Bring a lightweight backpack for mobility to keep valuables, medications, snacks, drinks with you
• Hands-free clip-on light
• Travel size sewing kit
• Toilet paper
• Notebook, pens, and pencils (for journaling, notes, etc…)
• Personal protective equipment (extra face masks, disposable gloves, face shields, hand sanitizer)
HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

• Nutrition
• Sleep
• Mindfulness practice
• Exercise options (e.g. yoga if unable to run/limited opportunities d/t space/weather)
• Ability to stand for long hours and lift heavy boxes of supplies
• Personal resiliency practices

MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY WELL BALANCED

• Ability to handle horrific scenes of loss, devastation and suffering
• Ability to deflect the anger from those you are trying to help
KEEPING FOCUSED

• Providing pharmacy services in extreme conditions accurately and error-free as efficiently as possible

WORKING INDEPENDENTLY AND AS PART OF A TEAM

• Pharmacists can expect to work shifts alone with no support help

• Multidisciplinary effort providing quality care
PATIENCE

• Take deep breaths and stay calm in the midst of difficult dispensing conditions, personalities, and demands
• Providing pharmacy services with limited resources and no automation takes additional time

THIS IS NOT ABOUT ME ATTITUDE

• Easy to complain
• Keep the right perspective
• Remember you are inconvenienced for a short period of time compared to the people for whom you are providing care
DOMESTIC VERSUS INTERNATIONAL

- US and international natural disaster sites volunteers need to have a license in good standing in their own state
- Passport needed for international travel to disaster sites

PHARMACY TECHNICIANS ROLE IN PATIENT CARE IN RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS

- Follow state laws and pharmacy policies
- Encourage patients to have an adequate supply of medications
- Help patients update their medication list
PHARMACY TECHNICIANS ROLE IN PATIENT CARE IN RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS (CONT.)

• If an emergency is declared in your state, filling emergency prescriptions for a 7 to 30 day supply is allowed if a patient’s prescriber or pharmacy cannot be reached
• Many states allow you to emergency fill Schedule III, IV, and V, during a state of emergency, but not Schedule II drugs
• For early refill insurance rejects, use override code ’13’, this designates an override is needed due to a disaster

GET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER BEFORE YOU LEAVE

• Upcoming bills paid or arrange to have someone pay them during your absence
• Notify your credit card company you will be traveling to another state
• Have all of your legal affairs in order and accessible to your designated legal representative
AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION QUESTION #2

- Thorough training prior to being deployed to a disaster site should include which of the following?
  - A. How to use a compass
  - B. Didactic modules, drills and practice group disaster response simulation exercises appropriate for your role as a healthcare provider
  - C. How to use night vision goggles to work in the dark

CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

- Walking into the unknown so expect the unexpected
- Site unprepared
- Not all disciplines are on site
- Security
- Going ‘Old School’ due to lack of internet access
- Interacting with people of many different cultures
- Dealing with the anger people have from being displaced during a disaster
EXPERIENCES DURING HURRICANES IKE AND GUSTAV

• Medical field station set up in a brand new equestrian center on the campus of Louisiana State University
• Arrived around 2am and had to have a functional pharmacy set up by 8 a.m.
• Pharmacy staff consisted of 6 pharmacists
• Paired up to work 8 hour shifts to keep the pharmacy open 24/7
• No cell phone reception, no WIFI, and no computers
• Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) – Red beans and rice

RETURNING HOME AFTER YOUR DISASTER RELIEF EXPERIENCE

• It is normal to feel sadness, grief, anger, and anxiety over what you saw and experienced
  • Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)
  • [https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/recovering-disasters](https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/recovering-disasters)
    • Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990
  • Post-incident stress debriefing
PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

• Connect with your personal social support system upon your return
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Co-workers

• Determine if your state has its own state-specific disaster behavioral health training that covers state specific deployment protocols, partners, and resources

• Find out if your employer offers convalescent leave for a few days upon your return

WAYS TO GET AND STAY INVOLVED IN DISASTER RELIEF

• It is important to volunteer through an organization or agency which can provide training and resources

• Do not self deploy to disaster areas to offer help

• Many websites provide contact information to organizations and agencies responsible for coordinating disaster relief efforts
AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

• Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] (www.fema.gov)
• National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters [NVOAD]
  https://www.nvoad.org/volunteer
• American Red Cross (www.redcross/volunteer/.org)
• Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS]
• Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA]
• Churches

STAYING INVOLVED

• State and local government emergency preparedness groups
• Consider using information from your journal post-deployment to write articles for publication describing your disaster relief experience
• Upon returning from your disaster relief tour of duty, consider doing a slide show presentation in an informal brown bag lunch setting for your coworkers
• Participate in continuing education and training related to disaster preparedness
AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION QUESTION #3

• While ensuring patients have an adequate supply of medications during a declared state of disaster, early refills can be processed using insurance override code
  • A. 21
  • B. 13
  • C. 10