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Re: Review of Hospital Planning for Terrorist Disasters: A Community-Wide Program by Deynes, Kahn and Koenig for Emergency Medicine Practice

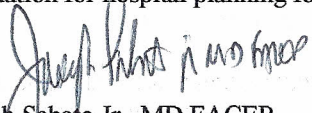
Terrorism and healthcare are inescapably linked. A terrorist event would lead to casualties that hospitals would need to care for. Hospitals themselves may be seen as high value and high impact targets. Although the likelihood of any given hospital being impacted by a terrorist event is low, intelligence leaders have recently predicted an event as inevitable. Successful response to terrorism would ideally result from community-wide planning. Hospital Planning for Terrorist Disasters: A Community-Wide Program provides a foundation for planning based on accepted key principles and the experience of prior events.

As the report states, disasters are defined by whether the health and medical needs of the victims are able to be met. The phases of comprehensive emergency management, mitigation (prevention), preparedness (planning), response (immediate reaction to event) and recovery are reviewed. The principles of incident command and the Hospital Incident Command System (HICS) are introduced and the need for multi-agency coordination in terrorist events is emphasized.

Disaster triage is covered extensively with an emphasis on the use of the START triage. A key concept is that triage is a dynamic and not a static event. The understanding and planning for the waves of casualties that occur in disasters, with the understanding that the most serious casualties often arrive after the least injured. In addition, in the days beyond the initial event, planning for the volume of patients with exacerbation of chronic conditions in a disrupted health care system is important.

Education and ongoing training are emphasized as key areas for successfully implementing plans. Security, the development of alternative care site strategies, psychological support services, surveillance, media, volunteers, personal protective equipment, decontamination, communications and surge capacity are discussed as important components of the plan and response.

One of the major problems with disaster planning is that it is a lot like insurance, hard to pay attention to until you need it. Preparing for terrorist events is a galvanizing opportunity that can bring the concern, energy and resources of a variety of community parties together. Planning for terrorist events provides a tremendous opportunity to strengthen overall disaster preparedness and use the resultant attention to develop improved community response. Learning from the more common non-terrorist events and the application to planning and response is the key. The special report: Hospital Planning for Terrorist Disasters: A Community-Wide Program presents an excellent foundation for hospital planning for terrorism that can be readily adapted to a number of threats.


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