

EDITOR

Letters to the

To the Editor:

On behalf of the American Medical Association and the nation's 800,000 physicians, I wish to congratulate you on the occasion of this first issue of *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*.

This peer-reviewed scientific journal is a welcome addition to the profession's continuing efforts to deliver quality care for all Americans, especially those in dire need because of natural or manmade disasters or public health crises. Your journal creates a scientific base for scholarly research and for advancing the professions of all of those involved in this vital phase of medicine.

Your interdisciplinary approach underscores the interdependence and mutual reliance that have characterized America's health care system through the generations. Integrating all of the components of preparedness and response in one journal for the first time is a major publishing accomplishment.

My colleagues and I applaud your efforts and wish you well in the months and years ahead.

William G. Plested III, MD
President, American Medical Association

To the Editor:

The events of September 11, 2001 fundamentally changed the lives in our nation and among our allies—the lives of our law enforcement community, our health care providers, and our emergency managers all have changed. Our government institutions at the federal, state, and local levels have had to adopt new collaborative relationships with each other and with the private sector. This need for collaboration and coordination is the reason why the Department of Homeland Security was created. DHS cannot own the solution to every problem that might befall our nation, but we are responsible for making sure that all of the forces of this great nation are brought to bear on the prevention of, protection against, response to, and recovery from catastrophic incidents.

This new journal, *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, is an example of the collaborative approach we must take to prepare for catastrophic incidents with medical consequences. Its interdisciplinary nature lends itself to research and best practices that are cross-cutting among different specialties in medicine, allied health professions, and emergency management. We in government depend on new knowledge to meet new challenges, whether created by an adversary or natural forces. We must be able to base our actions on best practices and sound scientific findings.

The journal will not only serve as a source of state-of-the-art information for those already part of the community of disaster professionals and emergency managers but also for every health professional and the public. The unique challenges of disaster medicine are not well known to the public, so the value of the journal will be to educate the professional community so that they can share this information with the public.

We at DHS appreciate the commitment of the American Medical Association to support the integration of health care and the public response to enhance the security of our homeland. I congratulate you on the initiation of *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*.

Michael Chertoff, JD
Secretary, US Department of Homeland Security

To the Editor:

I congratulate the American Medical Association on launching its new publication, *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*. The Department of Health and Human Services understands the importance of disseminating peer-reviewed studies and scholarly discourse in this rapidly evolving field of medicine.

As the United States prepares for and responds to diverse public health challenges such as pandemic influenza, emerging infectious diseases, the consequences of natural disasters, and acts of terrorism, it is crucial that our experiences become part of the evidence base that supports future plans and operations. By strengthening the scientific basis of public health and medical responses to disasters and other public health emergencies, your journal can contribute to the preparedness of our public health infrastructure and improved care for individuals in the event of a crisis.

The Department of Health and Human Services has recently reorganized its emergency preparedness activities under the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Rear Admiral W. Craig Vanderwagen, US Public Health Service. ASPR is striving to integrate innovations from the academic, clinical, public health, and public safety communities into cohesive plans for national preparedness. The scientific literature, including *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, can play a pivotal role in this mission. Congratulations on publication of the first issue.

Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services

To the Editor:

It is an honor to write this letter in support of the American Medical Association's *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*.

Health Action in Crises (HAC) is the World Health Organization (WHO)–wide effort to optimize the Organization’s capacity to strengthen and support Member States and others in preparing for and responding to crises. HAC focuses on assessing health priorities in crises and emergency settings, coordinating health interventions, ensuring that gaps are identified and filled particularly in relation to restoration of basic public health functions, and supporting local capacity and systems strengthening. HAC also focuses on assisting Member States in developing comprehensive strategies for emergency preparedness and risk reduction and in supporting countries in strengthening health transition and recovery programs following crises, disasters, and conflicts.

I congratulate the American Medical Association for the support they have given over the years in meeting the demand for well-trained health care professionals in response to disasters. This new journal is an ideal vehicle for defining the science of disasters and public health emergencies for all disciplines that have a role and a responsibility in protecting the health of a population.

Please accept WHO-HAC’s sincere best wishes for the inaugural issue and the many successful editions that will follow.

Ala Alwan, MD
Assistant Director-General, World Health Organization

To the Editor:

It is an honor to write this letter in support of the American Medical Association’s journal *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*.

Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath reminded the nation that we still have a long way to go to be prepared for disasters. This disaster in particular was a stark reminder of how impoverished communities and significant health disparities make preparedness planning so challenging. The need to identify and plan for vulnerable subgroups is vital because these populations are at higher risk and have unique needs that require special attention. This journal will ensure that these and other gaps are identified and filled. *Disaster Medicine* will be a platform for comprehensive dialogue that will only strengthen the local public health system and its private sector partnerships.

I congratulate the American Medical Association for the support they have given the American Public Health Association (APHA) in the past. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* is an ideal vehicle for defining the science of disasters and public health emergencies for all public health workers who have a role and responsibility in protecting the health of a population.

Please accept APHA’s strong support for the inaugural issue and the many successful issues to follow.

Georges Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (Emeritus)
Executive Director, American Public Health Association

To the Editor:

It is an honor to write this letter in support of the American Medical Association’s new journal *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*.

The American Red Cross strongly supports this initiative to promote a scientific base for community planning, response, and recovery from any major public health emergency. This project enhances our national efforts to ensure that the American public is ready in times of disaster, and empowers our dedicated volunteers by establishing best practices for preparedness and response efforts. This effort also recognizes the value of ensuring preparedness for all community assets, public and private.

I congratulate the American Medical Association for the support they have given the Red Cross over the years in meeting the demands for well-trained health care professionals. This new journal is an ideal vehicle for continuing this partnership.

Please accept the Red Cross’ best wishes for the inaugural issue and many successful issues to follow.

Jack McGuire
Interim President and CEO, American Red Cross

To the Editor:

On behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA), congratulations to you and the American Medical Association in the launch of *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*. The ANA was honored to have participated in your efforts to conceptualize a truly multidisciplinary journal that links disaster preparedness and response with public health readiness. Disaster response is a team effort requiring the skills, knowledge, and expertise of all health professionals—not to mention the willingness of providers to respond when called. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* will be an essential tool that will provide health care professionals with the most up-to-date, science-based practice information for disaster response and public health preparedness.

The science of disaster and public health preparedness and response continues to evolve and grow. Harnessing this new knowledge and research so that it can be put into practice as expeditiously as possible is absolutely necessary to improve the success both nationally and internationally of response capabilities. The ANA supports the mission of this journal as it strives to be timely, to speak to the full spectrum of health providers, and to provide rigorous, peer-reviewed scholarship.

Again, congratulations to you on the inaugural issue of *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*. Nursing looks forward to being a strong contributor to the journal, as well as using its contents to improve our ability to prepare and respond to disasters and other public health emergencies.

Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR
President, American Nurses Association