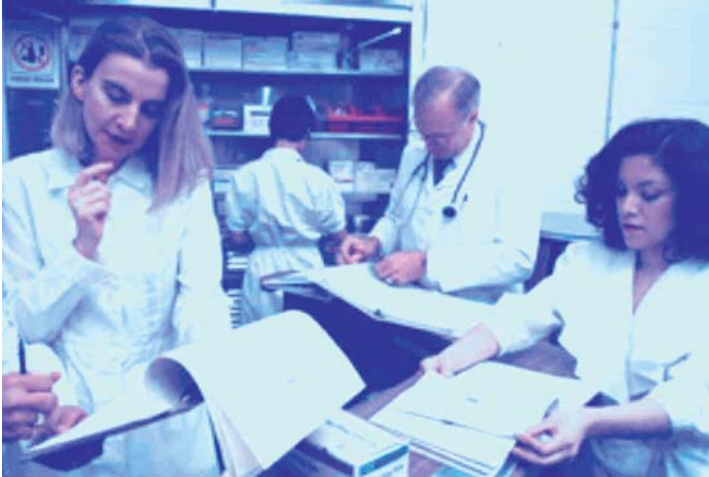




The Aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Continued from page 2...



Three Palm Beach County hospitals – Good Samaritan, Palm Beach Gardens and Jupiter medical centers – are actually in hurricane evacuation areas, though the hospitals determine whether to remain open during a storm.

By state law, all Florida hospitals are required to have a disaster plan that is reviewed by county officials. Hospitals also meet regularly with one another and local emergency officials to review the plans that cover hurricanes and other emergencies.

While area hospitals work closely with county emergency officials, hospital administrators make the call on whether to close ahead of an approaching storm. Local hospitals have agreements with other hospitals to transfer patients if a hurricane forces them to evacuate.

Once the National Weather Service issues a hurricane watch, indicating a hurricane is likely within the next 36 hours, area hospitals typically stop elective procedures and try to discharge as many hospital patients as they safely can. That's because the hospitals would likely be operating on generator power following a storm and some patients may be better off at home or outside the area affected by the storm, hospital officials say.

All of the Palm Beach County hospitals communicate with one another and with county officials on the same radio frequency, which should alleviate any communication problems during a natural disaster. Also, Palm Beach hospitals would likely fare better than counterparts New Orleans because no hospitals are below sea level.

Source: Palm Beach Post

20,000 doctors affected by Katrina, possible up to 6,000 displaced

Hurricane Katrina and the city-swamping floods that drowned New Orleans and surrounding areas appear to have dislocated up to 5,944 active, patient-care physicians. A new University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill study reports that is the largest single displacement of doctors in U.S. history, and Hurricane Rita may have boosted the total by an unknown degree.

Nearly 6,000 is the approximate number of physicians doing primarily patient care in the 10 counties and parishes in Louisiana and Mississippi that have been directly affected by Katrina flooding," said Dr. Thomas C. Ricketts, deputy director for policy analysis at UNC's Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, and professor of health policy administration at the School of Public Health. "Over two-thirds – 4,486 – of those were in the three central New Orleans parishes that were evacuated."

The number displaced was also more than one-quarter of the total number of new physicians who start practice in the United States each year, according to Ricketts.

Of the physicians in the Katrina flood-affected areas, which included six Louisiana and four Mississippi counties or parishes, the majority, 2,952, were specialists with 1,292 in primary care and 272 in obstetrics and gynecology, the researcher found. Another 2,052 physicians were in 16 Louisiana parishes that FEMA identified as being severely affected (Level 1 Disaster Declaration). That included 144 residents in training as well as 1,032 specialists, 724 primary care physicians and 140 obstetrician-gynecologists. Doctors involved primarily in administration, research or education were excluded from the total.

Ricketts said that not only did many practicing physicians lose their practices and income, but practically all of the health records in the community health centers within the poorer neighborhoods of New Orleans were destroyed.

"One possibly positive result of the disasters could be greater support for electronic medical records, explained Ricketts. "Also, some health-care officials may see the opportunity to reorganize and restructure their efforts, although some physicians may decide to retire instead of re-opening their practices."

Hygeians Raise Funds for Hurricane Victims

The American Red Cross estimates that more than \$2 billion will be required to meet its cost for the emergency needs of Hurricane Katrina and Rita survivors. This is a sum 20 times greater than the relief provided by the Red Cross for all hurricanes in 2004. This assessment is based on the nearly one million people who require meals, shelter, financial assistance and other essential services over various periods of time.

As a part of our ongoing philanthropy program, Hygeians in both the Miami Lakes, Florida and Toronto, Canada offices donated personal funds to hurricane victims through the Red Cross organization. The corporation matched all funds at 100%. As the recovery and relocation efforts continue, we invite you to make a donation to the Red Cross in one of three ways - at the organization's link at www.hygeia.net, at www.redcross.org, or by mail to the American Red Cross, P. O. Box 37243, Washington, DC 20013.



American Red Cross