# Adapting Standards of Care Under Extreme Conditions

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## Speakers

- **Kristine Gebbie, DrPH, RN** - Elizabeth Standish Gill Professor of Nursing and Director of the Center for Health Policy at Columbia University School of Nursing
- **Kathleen M. White, PhD, RN** - Associate Professor and Director of Faculty Practice at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

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## Call-In

- **Phone:** 800-452-0662
- **Fax:** 518-426-0696
- **Email:** cphp@uamail.albany.edu

## Evaluation

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Adapting Standards of Care Under Extreme Conditions: Guidance for Professionals During Disasters, Pandemics and Other Extreme Emergencies

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Purpose – The Question

- Decisions about care during extreme circumstances:
  - Changes in resources available
  - Practice in unusual settings
  - Unfamiliar settings or patients

Why This Concern

- Fear expressed by providers
  - I’ll be held to a standard I can’t meet
  - I’ll be charged with malpractice
  - I’m not really ready for a disaster

Emergency Preparedness

- Planning ahead increases the potential for:
  - Minimizing damage
  - Using resources wisely
  - Protecting responders from physical and mental harm

Emergency Preparedness

- Nothing in this broadcast replaces:
  - The individual responsibility of the health professional to be ready for emergencies
  - The responsibility of every health organization to plan for and practice emergency response

It All Begins With You

- A personal and professional plan that includes
  - Essential supplies, medications, documents
  - Communication information for family
  - Backup support for dependents if you must work during an event
Planning On a Larger Scale

- National Incident Management System
  - The overall approach to
    - Planning
    - Mitigation
    - Response
    - Recovery

Planning On a Larger Scale

- National Incident Management System
  - The structure on which integration of activities is built
    - Interagency collaboration at all levels
    - Interstate provision of support through EMACs
    - Decision making during events

Reminder

- During an emergency, the circumstances have changed
  - Your competencies have not changed
  - Not the standards of care have not changed

Health Care

- Planning and practicing for emergencies is required by the Joint Commission
- States require planning and practice

Legal Basis

- Scope and Standards for Professional Practice
- Professional Code of Ethics
- National Guidelines on Care in Emergencies
Challenges to Meeting Expectations

- Loss of essentials
  - No supplies delivered
- No power or water
- Shortage of workers
  - Unable or unwilling to work

The Ethics of Emergencies

- Utilitarian framework
  - The greatest good for the greatest number
  - A sharp shift from our usual focus on each individual

Transparent planning and clear communication to the public are essential process values that support this approach.

What are the Priorities?

- Maximize worker and patient safety
- Do not add additional injury to the burden of the response
- Maintain airway and breathing, circulation and loss of blood
  - Some other routines can wait
- Maintain or establish infection control
  - Including ongoing treatment such as for TB
## What Might be Left for Later

- Routine care activities
- Administration of oral medications
- Extensive documentation of care
- Maintenance of complete privacy and confidentiality
- Elective procedures

## Who Does This Apply To?

- Any licensed health care professional
  - At the immediate site of the disaster
  - At your usual place of work
  - At your own facility, but at a relocated site
  - If you are a volunteer

## A Word About Volunteering

- No SUV's! (Spontaneous Unauthorized Volunteers)
- Respond only when you know where you are going and to whom you will report
  - Join your local medical reserve corps or other organized team
  - Register with your state’s Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP)
  - Participate in training and exercises to keep your skills current

## What do Agencies Need to Consider in Advance?

- Anticipate the inclusion of volunteers into care teams:
  - Coordinate access to volunteers with local public health and emergency management agencies.
  - Establish a mechanism for credentialing of volunteer staff consistent with ESAR-VHP.

## Most Health Professionals

- Will not be at a ‘scene’ doing battlefield triage
- Will not be in an emergency department doing decontamination
- Will be giving nursing, medical or other care
  - Under unusual circumstances
  - Within Incident Command Structure rather than usual chain of command

## Special Notes to Health Professionals

- Ensure that health institutions and professionals are included in all planning for legal declarations of emergencies
- Ensure that legal counsels to organizations that employ health professionals are included in community planning.
- During an emergency, record changes in expectations about care, and the impact on patients and community.
### What do Agencies Need to Consider in Advance?

- Develop descriptions of potential reconfigurations of clinician teams or physical resources

- Ensure that emergency plans include capacity for rapid education including any changes in protocols needed to:
  - Maintain a regular inventory of resources specific to potential emergencies
  - Include human resources and staff development personnel in planning so they prepare templates in advance

- Include opportunities for professional decision-making about adapting standards in drills and exercises on a regular basis.

- Distribute daily information on staffing expectations, including role of volunteers, to at least:
  - Inform your staff how volunteer credentials are being established, and
  - Specify any unusual expectations, such as delegation to unlicensed personnel.

- If legal changes such as governor’s declaration of emergency has been invoked, communicate this to staff.
- Provide just-in-time training specific to the event, including any changes in protocols.

### During an Emergency Every Agency should

- Participate in post-event evaluation
  - Within the organization
  - Across the community

- Do a psychosocial needs assessment for those responding, and arrange assistance if indicated.
- Return to pre-event status as quickly and smoothly as reasonable.
### What Do Health Care Professionals Need to Do in Advance?

- Prepare your personal/professional emergency plan
- Participate in continuing education on emergency preparedness
- Participate in emergency drills and exercises

### What Do You Need To Do in Advance?

- Learn the legal basis for professional care, and the legal structure of your state regarding health professionals during emergencies.
- Provide clear information to any employer or any volunteer organization where you are enrolled about any limitations on availability or any special skills (e.g., experience with community or emergency triage) applicable to emergency conditions.

### During an Event

- Use your professional competence to provide the best care possible given the resources and physical conditions under which you are working.
- Use assigned or announced information resources to clarify any changes in protocols or staff roles.

### Post-Event

- Participate in post-event evaluation.
- Do a psychosocial needs assessment for self and family, and seek assistance if indicated.
- Update your personal plan if indicated.
- Participate in activities to facilitate return to pre-event status.

### Thank you to the ANA working group

- Kristine M. Gebbie, DrPH, RN, Co-chair
- Kathleen M. White, PhD, RN, CNAA,BC Co-chair
- Pat Adamski, MSN, MBA
- Sherri-Lyne Almeida, DrPH, MSN, RN, CEN, FAEN
- Kaye Bender, PhD, RN, FAAN
- Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP
- Sam Benson, AEMT-P
- James D. Bentley, PhD
- Joseph L. Cappello, BSN, MA
- Roberta Carlin, MS, JD
- Colleen Conway-Welch, PhD, CNM, FAAN
- Donna Dorsey, MS, RN, FAAN
- Patricia Drehoib, MPH, RN
- Andrea M. Garcia, JD
- Barbara Hatcher, PhD, MPH, RN
- James J. James, MD, DrPH, MHA
Thank you to the ANA working group

Patricia A. La Brosse, APRN,BC
CAPT Roberta Lavin, MSN, APRN,BC
Nancy McKelevy, MS, RN
Karen O’Brien, MN, RN
Marilyn Pattillo, PhD, RN, APRN
Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR
Sally J. Phillips, PhD, RN
Carol A. Romano, PhD, RN, FAAN
Linda J. Stierle, MSN, RN, CNA,BC
Beth Stover, RN, CIC
Italo Subbarao, DO, MBA
Raymond E. Swienton, MD, FACEP
Martha Turner, PhD, RN
Mary Jean Schumann, MSN, RN, MBA, CPNP
Cheryl A. Peterson, MSN, RN
Kate Markovs, MS, RN
Patricia Rowell, PhD, APRN,BC

Resources


• University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics Pandemic Influenza Working Group (2005). Stand on guard for thee: ethical considerations in preparedness planning for pandemic influenza. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics.

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