Medical Librarians In Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

Objective:
Explore the potential roles for medical librarians in disaster and emergency settings and assess the training needs of librarians serving as disaster information specialists.

Methods:
The new Disaster Information Management Research Center (DIMRC) at the National Library of Medicine launched a Disaster Information Specialist pilot project in fall 2007 to experiment with roles for medical librarians in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Partners in the pilot project are:
- Sarasota Memorial Hospital, Bishopric Medical Library
- Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS), James A. Zimble Learning Resource Center
- National Institutes of Health, NIH Library
- New York University School of Medicine, Frederick L. Ehrman Medical Library
- Bethesda Medical Libraries Emergency Preparedness Partnership:
  - Suburban Hospital Library
  - NIH Library
  - National Naval Medical Center, Stitt Library
  - USUHS Learning Resource Center
  - DIMRC/NLM

Each project partner is taking a different approach to collaborating with its community’s disaster planners, emergency responders, and/or researchers to assess and meet a diverse range of disaster-related health information needs.

Results and Conclusions:
Reported experiences and findings from this pilot (and from other libraries already engaged in similar activities) will be used to develop recommendations for disaster information outreach. Information is a critical component of successful disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts and there are numerous ways libraries and library networks can participate in these efforts.

Medical librarians participating in the project are assessing user needs, identifying gaps in available resources and in the published and grey literature, participating in disaster drills, working with planners, and providing reference services and training classes. Based on these first-hand experiences, they will assist in developing a national training curriculum for librarians who would like to develop basic skills in meeting disaster information needs. They will also advise on core competencies and advanced training for librarians who want to develop expertise as disaster information specialists.