

# COMMENTARY

## The Importance of Journals to the Growing Discipline of Disaster Medicine

Steven J. Phillips, MD

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) has created an international network of nearly 6000 medical libraries with an increasing number of disaster information specialist (DIS) librarians. There are approximately 700 DIS librarians in 49 states and 10 countries. DIS librarians work closely with their local and regional first-responder and first-receiver communities and often sit in their local emergency operations centers as dedicated information specialists. An example is the National Institutes of Health's DIS librarian, who is on call to staff the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response operations center, in Washington, DC, in addition to fulfilling its disaster health information needs.

The NLM has a long history of providing health information, training, and tools for disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. Examples span decades, from providing advice for the 1984 Bhopal, India, gas leak, to establishing disaster information centers in Central America after Hurricane Mitch, to developing software to assist in DNA identification of victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Libraries were used by responders to Hurricane Katrina as communications hubs and provided access to information and the Internet during the recovery efforts. NLM's Disaster Information Management Research Center (DIMRC; <http://disaster.nlm.nih.gov>) liaised with other libraries to provide up-to-date, accurate information related to the H1N1 pandemic, the effects of the 2009 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and the 2011 nuclear accident in the Fukushima prefecture of Japan. DIMRC also responded to the 2010 Haitian earthquake and subsequent cholera epidemic, providing on-site and remote services, along with personnel, to support the response and recovery efforts. In January 2011, the Stafford Act was amended to state that the Federal Emergency Management Agency designate libraries as temporary relocation facilities during major disasters and emergencies under its Public Assistance Grant Program.

- In 2007, the NLM established a DIMRC in the Division of Specialized Information Services. DIMRC is carrying out numerous research projects, including:
  - Organizing the disaster literature
  - Developing the DIS librarian, a new potential subspecialty of library science, to promote the innovative use of librarians to support emergency personnel in preparedness, response, and recovery activities
  - Creating the following information resources and tools for responders:

- Wireless Information Systems for Emergency Response (WISER) was designed to assist first responders in hazardous material incidents and provides a wide range of information on hazardous substances, including substance identification support, physical characteristics, human health information, and containment and suppression advice (<http://wiser.nlm.nih.gov>).

- Radiation Emergency Medical Management (REMM) provides guidance for health care providers, primarily physicians, about clinical diagnosis and treatment of radiation injury during radiological and nuclear emergencies. REMM provides just-in-time, evidence-based, usable information with sufficient background and context to make complex issues understandable to those without formal radiation medicine expertise. REMM is Web-based information and is downloadable in advance, so that it is available during an emergency if the Internet is not accessible (<http://www.remm.nlm.gov>).

- Chemical Hazards Emergency Medical Management (CHEMM) enables first responders and other health care providers and personnel to plan for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of mass-casualty incidents involving accidental or terrorist chemical releases. CHEMM is a Web-based resource that is downloadable in advance and thus is available during an event if the Internet is not accessible. It provides evidence-based information and guidance on a wide variety of topics, including quick chemical identification, acute patient care guidelines, and initial event activities (<http://chemm.nlm.nih.gov>).

- DIMRC is engaged in 11 research projects for BHEPP related to patient information management, communications, information access, and responder training (Figure). DIMRC provides access to high-quality disaster health information at all stages of preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery. DIMRC collects, organizes, and disseminates health information for natural, accidental, or deliberate disasters. DIMRC is committed to providing this essential information as part of the federal effort to help prepare, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the adverse health effects of disasters in conjunction with federal, state, local government, nongovernmental and international organizations, and local communities.

DIMRC supports the information needs of emergency and disaster personnel with "just-what-I-need information, just in time." DIMRC identifies, organizes, and makes accessible peer-reviewed journals and other relevant literature that is related to all-hazard preparedness, disaster mitigation, response, and recovery. Journal examples include *Disaster Medicine and Pub-*

# FIGURE

**BHEPP Projects.**

BHEPP Disaster Research and Development Projects			
Patient Information Management	Communications	Information Access	Responder Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Pen</li> <li>• Patient Data Exchange</li> <li>• Patient RFID Tracking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laser Back-up</li> <li>• Dark Fiber Back-up</li> <li>• MARS Radio Back-up</li> <li>• Wireless Voice Bridge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prescription Drug Access in Disaster</li> <li>• Disaster Information Specialist</li> <li>• Lost Person Finder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual World Disaster Training</li> </ul>

lic Health Preparedness (*DMPHP*) and *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*. A recent response to a query revealed that of the approximately 3000 network libraries, 97 libraries have issues of *DMPHP* and 85 libraries subscribe to the journal; 86 libraries have some issues of *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, with 47 currently subscribed.

The NLM specializes in all aspects of information management and communications and provides many services and resources to scientists, health professionals, historians, and the public. The Library counts nearly 12 million books, journals, manuscripts, audiovisuals, and other forms of medical information in its holdings, making it the largest health science library in the world. MEDLINE, the principal online bibliographic citation database, is used internationally to provide access to the world's biomedical journal literature.

The decision whether to index a journal for this service is an important one and is made by the Director of the NLM, based on considerations of both scientific policy and scientific quality. The Literature Selection Technical Review Committee (LSTRC), authorized under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 USC Appendix 2), was established by NLM to review journal titles and assess the quality of their contents. Approxi-

mately 5000 journals are indexed and included in the MEDLINE database. The LSTRC meets 3 times per year and considers approximately 140 journals at each meeting. The journal selection activity of LSTRC is analogous to the National Institutes of Health's decision-making process, with respect to research grant awards: The relative scientific merit of individual grant applications is determined by Study Sections in the same way that journals are evaluated by the LSTRC. Many journals are rejected and those that are accepted often go through multiple reviews before being approved and indexed. A remarkable exception to the usual review process was the early acceptance into MEDLINE of *DMPHP*. In addition to this journal's high quality, the need for a dedicated disaster medicine journal was recognized by LSTRC.

I want to commend the American Medical Association for supporting the publication of *DMPHP*. It is one of a handful of journals indexed in MEDLINE that is devoted entirely to comprehensive and authoritative articles and information emphasizing public health preparedness and disaster response for all health care and public health professionals. In its nearly 5 years in existence, *DMPHP* has published important information related to the September 11, 2001 terrorist and subsequent anthrax attacks, the 2004 southeast Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, severe acute respiratory syndrome, the H1N1 influenza pandemic, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and radiation disasters. All health care and public health professionals must be prepared to respond to emergency situations, and *DMPHP* is committed to the medical and public health communities that are the stewards of the health and security of citizens worldwide.

**Author Affiliation:** Dr Phillips is Associate Director, National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health.

**Correspondence:** Address correspondence and reprint requests to Dr Steven J. Phillips, 6707 Democracy Blvd, Suite 510, Bethesda, MD 20817 (e-mail: steven\_phillips@nlm.nih.gov).

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