



Preface

Critical State of Disaster Preparedness



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Disasters both natural and anthropogenic are increasing in intensity and frequency. 2018 marked the eighth consecutive year in which greater than seven high-consequence natural disasters occurred in the United States alone. These numbers do not include mass shootings or disease outbreaks, such as measles, influenza, and hepatitis A.

Unfortunately, our health care systems, which are already overburdened, undersupported, and in some cases nonexistent, are often unprepared for a sudden surge of patients or substantial infrastructure failure. Disasters overwhelm local capacity, leading to sudden or gradual decline of the health of a community. Preparing for disaster is foremost in a community's priority at the time of the disaster and immediately after. For a variety of reasons, disaster preparedness awareness during normal operations can wane, leading to inadequate preparedness. The 2019 US National Health Security Preparedness Index, which assesses the ability to provide health care in large-scale public threats, revealed only a moderate level of overall preparedness with a score of 6.7 out of 10. However, the metric measuring the ability to maintain quality health care during the event and after was only 4.9, revealing a significant gap in preparedness.¹

Intensive care units (ICUs) and providers should be on the frontlines of disaster planning as most of the injuries and pathologies of today's disasters often need higher level of care. Critical care providers also have experience in triage and utilization of resources. The editors of this publication have given a broad overview of considerations for ICU preparation as well as specific examples of how others have confronted significant threats to health security for their critically ill patients. Our hope in bringing these

expert authors together is to motivate our colleagues and all stakeholders to make disaster preparedness a priority in their hospitals and practices.

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1. National Health Security Preparedness Index. Update National Health Security Index 2019. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Available at: <https://nhspi.org/>. Accessed July 5, 2019.