



Albany County Medical Reserve Corp Volunteer Newsletter

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The Albany County Department of Health's Medical Reserve Corp Volunteer Newsletter is designed to keep our volunteers informed about Albany County's emergency preparedness efforts, volunteer training opportunities, and pertinent emergency preparedness news.

Psychological First Aid

On Thursday, September 20, 2007 Valerie Cole, PhD provided Albany County Medical Reserve Corp members with an introduction to Psychological First Aid (PFA). According to Dr. Cole's handouts, PFA is a set of tools that can be used to provide compassionate care and emotional support to survivors and relief workers during disasters and public health emergencies. PFA provides practical ways to help people with their basic needs and immediate concerns, while providing mechanisms for supporting disaster responders as well. Research indicates that most survivors of a disaster will recover without long-term psychological problems or pathology. However, most disaster survivors and those who are exposed to the disaster will experience a broad range of reactions that can be expressed physically, emotionally, behaviorally, cognitively or spiritually.



Previous disaster events and research have shown that the size of the psychological footprint in a disaster is much larger than the size of the medical footprint. For example, after the 1995 Sarin gas attack in Tokyo, 5,510 patients sought medical care for symptoms related to the attack. In actuality, only a small portion of those with symptoms were actually exposed to the deadly gas. The ratio of psychological causality to medical causality was 4:1.

PFA provides comfort and support to people affected by disaster, offers coping strategies for disaster-related stress, decreases number of people seeking care in health-care settings, and fosters teamwork among disaster responders. The components of PFA are providing comfort care; recognizing basic needs and helping to solve problems and complete practical tasks; validating survivors' feelings and thoughts; connecting people with their support systems; providing education about anticipated stress reactions; and reinforcing strengths and positive coping strategies.

Self-care is an often overlooked aspect of PFA and disaster work but is essential that disaster responders model good self-care for survivors and take care of themselves so that they can continue to provide service.

The issue of PFA is a vital component to any disaster response and we plan to offer more PFA trainings in the future. If you are interested in completing an online course in PFA visit the Center for Disaster Medicines website at

http://www.centerfordisastermedicine.org/disaster_mental_health.html.

We have extra handouts from Dr. Cole's presentation, if you would like a copy please contact Jill at 447-4633 or by email at jdunkel@albanycounty.com.

Inside this issue:

Psychological First Aid	1
NACCHO Grant	2
Trainings & Drills	2



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NACCHO Grant

The Albany County Medical Reserve Corp has applied for a capacity building grant offered by the National Association of City and County Health Officials. If received, the grant funds will be used to supplement our volunteer training curriculum. If you are aware of any other grant opportunities in Albany County to support volunteer development through foundations or civic organizations please email Jill at jdunkel@albanycounty.com.

Trainings

We are in the process of creating a training calendar for 2008. We hope to offer all trainings on multiple occasions to accommodate the schedules of our MRC volunteers. The trainings we anticipate offering include:

- POD—Point of Dispensing Training - provides an overview of our POD plan and reviews the roles/responsibilities of MRC volunteers at a POD.
- ICS—Incident Command System—This three- hour course (ICS100/NIMS 700), which can also be completed online, orients the student to the Incident Command System.
- WMD—Weapons of mass destruction awareness provides an overview of biological, chemical, and radiological agents.
- Special Needs—Working with special needs populations in a disaster.
- Family Preparedness—Creating a family preparedness plan.
- Fit-testing—Fit-testing volunteers for N95 masks.
- Photo IDs—We will continue to schedule appointments for MRC volunteers to receive their photo identification badges.

As many of you have expressed interest in obtaining additional training in Psychological First Aid, we hope to work with Dr. Cole to provide a full-day training on PFA. We will keep you posted.

Drills

We are still looking for 2-3 additional volunteers who are willing to wear a bathing suit and be decontaminated with warm water at a drill on Saturday, December 1, 2007 at the Elsmere Fire House. Please contact Jill if you are interested in participating.

We are in the process of finalizing our Flu Clinic schedule and we will need volunteers to assist with registration. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Jill. Details are also being finalized for community flu PODs where we will integrate MRC volunteers. We will update you as details become available.

Our Newest MRC Member

Because so many of you have asked, here is photo of Jill's new baby. Charlotte Dunkel was born August 2, 2007. She was 9 lb 8 oz and 19 inches long.

