

When Disasters Happen, Pharmacy Responds

AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING,

Hurricane Florence is getting ready to make landfall on the East Coast between North Carolina and Virginia with a changing pathway and the potential to stall over the region, creating massive flooding. Hurricane Helene is not far behind and is headed toward the United Kingdom, while tropical storms Isaac and Joyce are swirling in the Atlantic with future potential for more disasters. Tropical Storm Olivia has made landfall in Maui — the first ever to do so — while the Big Island of Hawaii is in recovery from Hurricane Lane, a Category 3 storm with 120 mph winds that hit the island a few weeks ago. The good news is that pharmacy has been responding even before these storms hit, ensuring that patients have been able to access medication and treatment in spite of the impending damage.

Much has changed in pharmacy's disaster response since Hurricane Katrina's devastation in 2005. At that time, millions of dollars in monetary and pharmaceutical donations were distributed by a variety of nonprofit and response organizations, as well as manufacturers, wholesalers, and other private-sector companies. But there

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was little coordination between them.

Without a central point of contact to coordinate collaboration between the pharmaceutical supply chain and the government, issues arose. Medical deliveries were held up at check-



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points, while hundreds of phone calls between government officials, and random contacts within individual companies, asked many of the same questions. Resolving questions or tackling obstacles proved time-consuming and wasteful.

PREPAREDNESS PHILOSOPHY

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Healthcare Ready notes that it “helps to strengthen healthcare supply chains through collaboration with public health and private sectors by addressing pressing issues before, during, and after disasters.”

It also serves as the convener of industry and government, helping to provide solutions to critical problems that impact patient health. Many best practices for healthcare preparedness and response have been developed from this effort. The group's preparedness philosophy is centered on the need to strengthen healthcare systems, versus building contingencies that may or may not ever be needed. Its vision asserts that “building the resiliency of our communities supports health and creates economic strength so that if disaster strikes quality of life

The following tip sheet titles are available:

- Preparing for a Natural Disaster
- Staying Healthy During a Natural Disaster
- Returning Home After a Natural Disaster

returns to normal as fast as possible. Working together, we ensure that we are stronger than the next disaster.”

DISASTER FEARS AND READINESS

In June, Healthcare Ready released results of a survey that showed, for the third consecutive year, that Americans fear natural disasters more than terrorism, global pandemic, or cyber attack combined, yet are poorly prepared for disasters.

The survey included 1,127 adults, and it found the number who expressed concerns about natural disasters (33%) continues to exceed those who worry about terrorist attacks (15%), cyber attacks (8%), environmental disasters (5%), or disease outbreaks (13%).

Healthcare Ready’s resources can address these issues. I was reminded of this critical resource during Hurricane Lane when I received an emergency response email update announcing that Healthcare Ready’s Rx Open was activated and engaged.

Rx Open is an interactive map that helps patients and providers find nearby open pharmacies in areas impacted by disaster. The

interactive map is at right.

In addition, Healthcare Ready has other resources, including tip sheets and Rx on the Run, which is a personalized wallet-sized card, available in both English and Spanish, for captur-

Healthcare Ready’s Findings:

- Only 35% of Americans could list all their prescription details, including dosage, if they had to evacuate their homes without their medications or medical supplies, down from 2017 (38%).
- Twenty-five percent of Americans reported they could only go two to three days without access to their medications or medical equipment before they began to experience negative health outcomes.
- More than half of Americans (53%) do not have any emergency preparation plans in place, yet 42% are concerned about an emergency happening.
- Americans are almost equally divided in their belief that a disaster could impact them in the next five years, with 51% perceiving it as very or somewhat likely, and 49% believing it is not very or not at all likely.

ing prescription information.

Ensuring our patients have access to their medications during a disaster is critical, and Healthcare Ready can help. If you or your colleagues want to connect with Healthcare Ready, or need assistance, contact alerts@healthcareready.org or 866-247-2694 or visit <https://www.healthcareready.org/>. **CT**

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Resources for patients to have access to their medications during a disaster. Above, Rx Open, a map of open pharmacies; and below, a Rx on the Run is a printable wallet card that documents important medical information.

RX ON THE RUN

Are you prepared if a disaster strikes? Many people stock up on water, bread, and canned goods, but forget about their medicine. Use Rx on the Run, to print a personalized wallet card that documents your prescriptions and other important medical information.