

# *Disaster Readiness Advisory #11*



*This Disaster Readiness Advisory, a special service to America's hospitals, contains guidance about disaster readiness. If you don't receive all two (2) pages, please call (202) 626-2298.*

## **New Planning Tool Available Weill/Cornell Bioterrorism and Epidemic Outbreak Response Model**

### **A Message to America's Hospitals:**

The American Hospital Association (AHA) is happy to announce that hospitals and health systems now have available to them on AHA's Web site a free computer-based model that will help them plan for large-scale antibiotic dispensing or vaccination campaigns for their communities. The model can be used to respond to bioterrorism or natural disease outbreaks.

Developed by researchers in the Department of Public Health at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City and funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), this is the first such computer model that hospitals and public health agencies can easily download and customize to meet their local needs. Using common spreadsheet software, hospital teams can examine different variables and scenarios in a very user-friendly fashion.

The research team, led by Nathaniel Hupert, M.D., M.P.H., tested a variety of patient triage and drug dispensing plans. Specifically, they evaluated the 2001 New York City and Washington, D.C. anthrax responses, subsequent large-scale live disaster drills in New York City and Arizona in which thousands of volunteers were given fake drugs in response to a hypothetical anthrax attack, and planning models for bioterrorism response developed by California, Florida, Illinois and other states. Taking elements from these plans, the research team developed two "best practice" dispensing clinic designs that could be used in the event of a bioterrorism attack (such as anthrax and smallpox) or in the setting of natural outbreaks requiring antibiotics or vaccinations.

While hospitals need to work with their local public health officials to plan for such emergencies, it is likely that you would be called upon to play a major role. The model provides a means of realistically estimating the number and type of staff required to operate mass prophylaxis clinics that can provide an entire area with critical antibiotics or vaccinations in a timely fashion. It also provides model floor plans that are designed for maximum efficiency.

Now that the government's voluntary smallpox vaccination campaign has ended, many AHA advisors have urged that more emphasis be placed on hospital planning for post-event responses. This model is an important step in that direction. We urge you to:

- ✓ **Ask your emergency planning staff to visit the AHA Web site at [www.aha.org/re/disasterreadiness](http://www.aha.org/re/disasterreadiness) to download the model and use it to assess what it would take to operate such a clinic for residents of your community.** You will need to give contact information so that we can provide updates and technical assistance on use of the model. We also are planning to develop opportunities to evaluate the model's usefulness and to participate in conference calls with the researchers who developed it.
  
- ✓ **Make sure your emergency planning staff is working with your state and/or local public health agencies and hospital associations to plan for responses to such events, including practice drills.**

The AHA will continue to look for additional ways to help hospitals and health systems as they play a leading role as first responders in their communities. And we continue to advocate before Congress and the administration for additional federal funding and resources you need to support your readiness efforts, with a particular focus on distributing federal funds more rapidly.

Sincerely,



Dick Davidson  
President

July 14, 2003

