



Uniformed Services University
of the Health Sciences
4301 Jones Bridge Road
Bethesda, MD 20814-4799

Release No.15-09-21

September 21, 2015

Contact: Sharon Holland, Office of External Affairs

Voice: 301-295-3578

Email: sharon.holland@usuhs.edu

New Curriculum Highlights Care Considerations for Seniors during a Disaster

Bethesda, MD – America’s senior citizens often face unique challenges during disasters. The National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health (NCDMPH) at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences has just released its newest resource for health educators and trainers, “Caring for Older Adults in Disasters: A Curriculum for Health Professionals,” to address these issues.

Developed through the support of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Caring for Older Adults in Disasters (COAD) curriculum is comprised of 24 lessons in seven modules covering topics ranging from special considerations for older adults in specific types of disasters to ethical and legal issues related to the care of the senior population during a disaster.

“This comprehensive new resource will benefit all healthcare professionals in preparing themselves and their staff for the realities of caring for seniors during a natural or man-made disaster,” said Dr. Kenneth Schor, acting director of the NCDMPH. “This issue grows in importance by the day as, according to the Administration on Aging, America’s older adult population (65+ years) is expected to grow to more than 21 percent of the population by 2040.”

The COAD curriculum’s lessons range from 30 to 120 minutes in length based on the particular learning context. They include suggested learning activities for educators to engage their learners, as well as required and supplemental readings for both learners and educators. The curriculum can be used in its entirety, teaching all lessons in the order provided, or trainers may select individual lessons or portions of lessons most relevant to their learners. The curriculum’s material can be adapted to best meet a specific setting and learner needs by substituting resources, modifying activities, or augmenting content.

Educators and trainers also have flexibility in how they choose to teach the content portions of the lessons (i.e., drawing on lecture, discussion, or group project modalities). The topics of the modules are:

Module 1 - Overview of the curriculum and a demographic background on older adults

Module 2 - Reviews of conditions already present in older adults before a disaster that may impact their preparedness, response, and recovery

Module 3 – Outline of special considerations for older adults in particular types of disasters

Module 4 - Overview of caring for older adults during the disaster cycle

Module 5 – Review of special considerations for older adults in various settings in which they reside and receive care

Module 6 – Overview of ethical and legal considerations for the care of the older adult population during a disaster

Module 7 – An interactive capstone activity, which allows learners to apply new knowledge to their specific role and work setting

Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way

The COAD curriculum presents lessons for dealing with a wide array of issues related to senior care in a disaster. An often overlooked aspect of disaster medicine and older adults are ethical and legal implications. In this module, authors Lillian E. Ringel, JD, of Columbia University, and Dr. Judith C. Ahronheim, of New York Medical College, include a discussion of the potential limits of patient autonomy in a public health emergency or disaster for adults with and without decisional capacity. Also outlined is information on individual state resources that providers can consult regarding state-specific regulations covering the participation of unaffiliated providers and other volunteers in a disaster.

“Caring for Older Adults in Disasters: A Curriculum for Health Professionals” can be accessed at <https://ncdmp.usuhs.edu/KnowledgeLearning/2015-OAC.htm>.

* * *

About the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences:

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), founded by an act of Congress in 1972, is the academic heart of the Military Health System. USU students are primarily active duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who receive specialized education in tropical and infectious diseases, TBI and PTSD, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, global health, and acute trauma care. A large percentage of the university's more than 5,300 physician and 800 advanced practice nursing alumni are supporting operations around the world, offering their leadership and expertise. USU also has graduate programs in biomedical sciences and public health committed to excellence in research, and in oral biology. The University's research program covers a wide range of clinical and basic science important to both the military and public health. For more information, visit www.usuhs.edu.