
FIP STATEMENT OF POLICY

Role of the pharmacist in disaster management

Introduction

Disasters — natural or man-made, wars or civil disorder and pandemics — have devastating effects on the lives of millions of people each year. Economic dislocation, collapse of political structures, terrorism, conflict, climate change, and mass population displacements are man-made disasters that also are increasing in impact.

All catastrophic events result in death, injury and associated ill health, both physical and mental, whether direct or indirect. As members of the health care team, pharmacists have two significant responsibilities related to disaster management. The first is to prepare for the possibility of disaster. The second is, in times of emergency, to respond according to their expertise to help the population receive the best health care possible in the situation.

Type of disaster

The severity of a disaster is measured in lives lost, economic loss and its effect on the ability of the population to rebuild their lives.

Natural disasters: Any catastrophic, rapid or slow onset, physical phenomenon that is naturally occurring and which can be geophysical, hydrological, climatological or biological in nature.

Human-made disasters: Catastrophic events caused mainly by one or more identifiable, deliberate or negligent human actions that occur in or close to human settlements. Examples include industrial, nuclear, and transport accidents, famine, conflict, displaced populations, explosions and terrorist attacks, power failures and resource shortages.

Disease outbreaks: Any occurrence of a disease in humans or animals that affects a human population, either directly or indirectly.

Impact of disasters

Disasters cause an increased demand for health support and create challenges to the delivery of social and health care. The extent of the disruptions in pharmacy



supplies and their effects is determined by the type and severity of the disaster and by the role of the pharmacy services.

It is important that all pharmacists' workplaces have a risk assessment and management plan so that, in the event of a disaster, the impact on the pharmacy services delivered is minimised and optimised in contribution in such crisis.

As health care professionals, pharmacists have an ethical duty beyond that of an ordinary citizen. Therefore, pharmacists should accept the responsibility of providing aid to others in disaster situations. The nature of the aid provided is determined by needs of the affected population, government direction and on the individual pharmacist's scope of practice, competence and expertise and his or her role within the health care system.

The document "Responding to disasters: Guidelines for pharmacy" provides guidance on what pharmacists need to consider in assessing the potential impact of disasters on the services they deliver. It also provides information to assist in managing the impact of the disaster.

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AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, FIP RECOMMENDS THAT:

All organisations providing services to pharmacists, providing pharmacy services, and all pharmacists:

- Identify potential disasters that could affect their pharmacy practice and the community they serve;
- Prepare for the possibility of a disaster occurring;
- Have plans in place to enable them to limit the impact of disasters and respond appropriately in the event of a disaster;
- Be aware of national plans and how pharmacists' own plans fit within and contribute to the wider health system;
- Manage the provision of services, during and after a disaster event;
- Monitor the effect of the disaster on services and adjust response plans accordingly.

Guidance for different types of pharmacy organisations is provided in the document "Responding to disasters: Guidelines for pharmacy". Specific overall responsibilities include:

- **Government:** Ensuring that legislation enables an appropriate level of care in times of disaster, with due considerations of the potential roles that pharmacists could play during such disaster;
- **Pharmaceutical supply chain (the pharmaceutical industry, distribution organisations, community pharmacies and, where appropriate, other**



local medicines distribution networks): Having plans and resources in place such that they can adequately maintain supply chain security and respond to supply chain disruptions.

- **Pharmacists associations:**
 - Undertaking an advocacy role for the development of national and subnational emergency plans that define and support the role of pharmacists;
 - Promoting among pharmacists the need for emergency planning;
 - Developing capacity-building initiatives to constantly increase knowledge and capacity of pharmacists to prevent and, if needed, respond to the different types of emergencies;
- **Pharmacy provider organisations/Businesses:** Preventing, planning and preparing for emergencies, and appropriately responding in times of emergency;
- **Individual pharmacists:** Recognising the need and duty to be individually responsible for both preparing for emergencies and for coping with an emergency when it occurs.

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This Statement references the following FIP Statements and documents:	: International Pharmaceutical Federation. Responding to Disasters: Guidelines for Pharmacy. The Hague, the Netherlands: FIP, 2017. Available at: http://www.fip.org/files/fip/publications/2016-07-Responding-to-disasters-Guideline.pdf