Preparing for Disasters: What Advanced Practice Nurses Working with Older Adults Need to Know

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“In Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina roughly 71% of the victims were older than 60 and 47% were over the age of 75. There is truly a need to plan and accommodate all Americans during emergencies, particularly older Americans.”

Christopher Hansen AARP Group Executive Officer
OBJECTIVES

• Discuss the vulnerabilities of older adults to disasters and emergencies

• Outline strategies that APNs can utilize with vulnerable elders for disaster emergency preparedness

Case Study

Elders Vulnerabilities during Disasters and Emergencies

1. Sensory issues
2. Delayed response time
3. Chronic Illness and medication use
4. Multiple loss effect
5. Mobility impairment
6. Memory disorder
Elders Vulnerabilities during Disasters and Emergencies

7. Hyper/hypothermia vulnerability
8. Issues pertaining to diversity
9. Generational differences in accepting assistance
10. Fear of victimization
11. Mental health stigma
12. Fear of loss of independence

Individual and Family Concerns

Disaster Plans for Individuals
Components of the Disaster Plan

- Emergency Information List
- Medical Information
- Seven Day supply of medications
- Safe Place to go
- Identify exits
- Have needed equipment
- Three Day kit

Table 1. Disaster Plan Checklist for Older Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Details</th>
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| Emergency Information List | Including:
  - Medical contact information
  - Names and numbers of family and friends to contact in event of emergency
  - Name and number of family member to contact (local)
  - Name and number of family member to contact outside of local
  -Phi 5 miles away
  - If you have a communication disability, include information on the best method of communication |
| Medical Information, including:
  - Medications, including over-the-counter, prescription, vitamins, and herbal products
  - Allergies and conditions
  - Medical equipment used
  - Communication or cognitive difficulties |
Organizational Vulnerability Assessment

All Hazards Approach
Focuses on developing capacities and capabilities that are critical to preparedness for a full spectrum of emergencies or disasters.

Institutional Disaster Plans
- Direction and control
- Internal and external resources
- 24/7 Communication
- Evacuation/Designating shelters
- Community Outreach agreements
- Response and Recovery
**Evacuation Planning**

- Determine when to evacuate
- Chain of command
- Develop clear procedures
- Drill
- Outline post-evacuation procedures
- Coordinate plans with local EMS

**Shelters and Elders**

- Recall vulnerabilities
- Not designed to meet unique needs
- Providers lack knowledge of caring for older adults

**Role of the APN in Shelter Triage**

- Leadership
- Knowledge of needs of elders
- Assessing, planning and providing care
- Triage tool
- Psychological First Aid
“By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail.”

Benjamin Franklin
References and Resources

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