



WARREN JONES EDITORIAL

President of The American Academy of Family Physicians



“

In May of 2000, more than 93,000 family physicians received FPReport featuring the article, “Bioterrorism: FPs may be the first to sound the alarm.” More than a year later, on September 11th, our preparation became prescience.

The American Academy of Family Physicians has long been committed to educating members on the appropriate response to chemical, biological and nuclear attacks. On September 11th that education became essential.

Three weeks after the terrorist attacks and just as the first anthrax case hit the news, more than 2,000 family physicians attended “The Family Physician’s Role in Recognizing and Responding to Bioterrorism,” a lecture held at the AAFP’s Annual Scientific Assembly. In November, we embarked on a full-scale educational campaign to provide family physicians, other health-care providers and the public with information on detection, reporting and

treatment of nuclear, biological and chemical contagions.

In December, we launched a Web site to provide family physicians, other health care providers and the public with the most up-to-date information available on bioterrorism.

Family physicians play a unique role in detecting, treating and educating about chemical and biological attacks. As first responders, we must prepare for the eventuality of an attack. We must be able to recognize obscure diseases and differentiate between an ordinary flu and flu-like symptoms caused by a chemical or biological agent.

Not only must we be aware of the proper treatments for patients suffering from conditions like anthrax exposure or smallpox, we must also be able to contain and report suspect cases in the interest of public health.

And we must be able to allay our patients’ fears as they face threats, real and imagined.

Twenty-four percent of all physician office visits are made to family physicians – more than to any other specialty. We work in clinics, hospitals, nursing homes and private practice. Our training focuses on the whole person and the whole family, from birth to death, and for that reason we are first responders.

We play integral roles in our communities where we are known as healers and friends. Our patients trust us with their lives. We shall continue to earn this trust in all situations — including the unthinkable — through a combination of education, preparation and commitment.

We will continue to collect and offer current information to health professionals and the public. We will plan for those who can not or will not. We are committed to doing our part. The American Academy of Family Physicians and our 93,500 members stand ready.”

Warren Jones M.D.

