

THE RAPID PULSE

January 2009

Faces & Places

WELCOME

Batavia, NY:

Clare K'Mara
Rossalyn Killinger

Berks, PA:

Linda Kolasinski
Julie Lyons

El Paso, TX:

April Carmona
Carolos Herrera
Ivan Pierce
Sylvia Layne

Eloy, AZ:

Ernest Lee
Jacquelyne Ivery
Garrett Spann

Florence, AZ:

David Herd
Cherie Getts
Leah Sanger
Taun Hughes
Doi Durtschi

Houston, TX:

Juliann Edenojie

Jena, LA:

Pamela Cotton
Theresa Adams
Troy Young

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THE DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

By CAPT Jose Rodriguez, Director

Welcome to another installment of *The Rapid Pulse!* As the newly appointed Director for the Division of Immigration Health Services (DIHS), I am pleased to be able to utilize this Director's Perspective column to be able to communicate with all DIHS employees. I look forward to continuing to utilize *The Rapid Pulse* as a vehicle to share vital information with the DIHS family.

I accepted the position of DIHS Director knowing that there would be challenges ahead for the Division, but also confident that we can make good changes happen in those areas needing improvement. Over the last three months, I have completed an assessment of the Division, especially focusing on the following areas:

- staffing models,
- electronic medical record (EMR),
- incentive pay for Public Health Service (PHS) officers,
- reorganization of DIHS Headquarters, and
- training and education.

The results of this assessment will be shared with the field soon. I have already visited 15 of the field facilities in order to get to know the staff and obtain their input on areas of concern.

I am truly committed to fostering a spirit of teamwork between Headquarters and the field. It is through team-

work that we will be better able to fulfill the mission that we have been given, and enhance the image of DIHS in the eyes of the Agency and the rest of the country.

I would like to welcome our new Medical Director that will serve as part of the DIHS HQ staff, CAPT Olga Grajales, who reported in January. She is a family physician and flight surgeon with 23 years of clinical and managerial experience with BOP and the U. S. Coast Guard. We are convinced that she will become a true asset to our organization as well as an integral part of the transformation we plan to achieve within our Division.

It is an honor for me to have been chosen to lead this Division, and I look forward to continuing to meet with many of you in the future.

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MY DEPLOYMENT TO THE FEDERAL MEDICAL STATION

By LCDR Jennifer Jones

During the recent United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Office of Force Readiness and Deployment (OFRD) hurricane deployments, I served as a nurse at the Federal Medical Station (FMS) which was set up at the Reed Arena on the campus of Texas A&M in College Station, TX.

As PHS Officers, we are not required to deploy in category specific roles, which offers us the opportunity to gain varied experiences. I chose to deploy as a nurse because I believe I could serve best in that capacity.

I am a member of the Tier One Rapid Deployment (RDF) Team #1 which was established, along with other RDF teams, in order to ensure that OFRD had existing teams already established for a more coordinated disaster response.

We have trained and bonded for almost three years. Let me say, there is no greater teacher than actual experience. Much of the preparation and planning that was in place seemed to have been either irrelevant or just not effectively implemented once we hit the ground.

In spite of the initial confusion, the team came together. We were fortunate to have been augmented by several Tier #3 PHS Officers, Texas A&M cadets, medical interns, nursing students, and other volunteers.

The mission of the USPHS Commissioned Corps is to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our nation. From that perspective, we were able to provide care and services for a particularly high risk group of evacuees.

The patients we served had risk factors such as: advanced age, cardiovascular disease (especially CHF), morbid obesity, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, incontinence and limited mobility. In many cases,

the acuity level was high. The evacuees came from private residences, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes.

Some were accompanied by spouses, caregivers, or other family members- others were alone. When we first admitted patients, we were frustrated that we didn't have the appropriate supplies and resources to care for this population. However, with each day we got better and better at meeting their needs.



The view inside Reed Arena where evacuees were housed

The billeting and meal options left a lot to be desired but this was a field deployment. Hotel and restaurant accommodations are idealistic but not realistic.

I was exhausted at the end of each shift but was renewed by the sincere gratitude from the evacuees. The compassion and attentiveness that was displayed by the FMS staff toward the evacuees was inspiring. There aren't many experiences that you can share with someone more intimate than when you are changing their incontinence brief.

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I had the pleasure of working with several truly remarkable caregivers and their family members. As PHS Officers, we are afforded the opportunity to assist the public in ways that we probably would otherwise not have in the civilian world.

I have a deeper appreciation for what we are called to do and a greater sense of pride wearing the uniform. Giving back to the community as well as society in general is a noteworthy mission.

It was a great experience in spite of the challenges. I highly recommend that all officers, especially junior officers, deploy in whatever capacity fits your personal qualifications and goals when the opportunity presents itself. It is an honor to serve!!

Editor’s Note: The Bryan-College Station Eagle ran an article which featured two of our nurses. The article can be found at the following online location (copy the link and paste in your web browser)

<http://www.theeagle.com/local/Ike-troubles-tough-but-bearable>

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HEALTH VISITS PUERTO RICO

By CDR Wanda W. Gonzalez

On May 31 through June 2, 2008 the Puerto Rico chapter of the Commissioned Officers Association (COA) welcomed ADM Joxel Garcia, MD, Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH).

During his stay, ADM Garcia visited the Puerto Rico National Guard as well as other areas of service. As part of the activities, ADM Garcia had a “greet and meet” with members of the Puerto Rico chapter of

the COA. Also participating were CAPT Lee Shackelford, Executive Assistant to the ASH and Ms. Patricia C. El-Hinnawy of the Communication Team.



ADM Joxel Garcia and CDR Wanda W. Gonzalez



Puerto Rico COA chapter member representatives from left to right: USCG: CDR Mark Osborn, MD, CDR John Esposito, DDS, CAPT Carlos Rivera, MD (Flight Surgeon); CDC: LCDR Fermin Arguello, MD; HRSA: ADM Joxel Garcia, MD ASH; CAPT Lee Shackelford, Executive Assistant to the ASH; DIHS: CDR Wanda W. Gonzalez, ARNP and FDA: LTJG Jose Colon

I had the pleasure of serving as the point of contact for the Puerto Rico chapter of the COA, and as activity coordinator for this event. During the meeting the group had the opportunity to meet and share ideas with ADM Garcia. He communicated his vision and great ideas to move the nation’s health forward. In addition, he expressed his appreciation to the Commissioned Officers of the Public Health Service for promoting public health.

This was a great experience for all involved!

HURRICANE IKE

By CDR Monique Matuskowitz

Hurricane IKE may have caused its Texas destruction starting September 12th, but preparations and actions at the Houston Immigration Facility started several anxious days beforehand.

Once the hurricane was projected to be so large and potentially disastrous, the decision was made to evacuate our 900 detainees.

Many man-hours, overtime and quick conferences took place to initiate such a large evacuation.

A site was located in Mississippi, approximately 600 miles away. This site had a new addition that had just recently been built; furnishings were not fully complete. We used this facility for our male detainees. Our female detainees, approximately 100, were sent to another facility in Florida.

There were three full flights that departed before the hurricane. Each flight transported medical staff and detainees to the temporary facility. Several other staff, both PHS and contract volunteers, drove with POVs, carrying much needed supplies. They left behind their families and homes to the mercy of IKE.

A few staff stayed behind. These team members managed local issues plus travel issues for those that had evacuated. After the storm passed, the local staff attempted to get the facility up and running again. Electricity was returned to the Houston facility approximately four days after the storm, but water leaks, mold and x-ray difficulties delayed the return of the detainees.

A few clinic staff had major damage to their homes. Large trees had crashed into their homes and caused great loss and significant water damage. Many local families and homes were without electricity for a full 15 days. Gas was difficult to obtain for both cars and generators, if you were lucky

enough to have a generator.

The detainees and staff were evacuated for 14 non-stop days. The return was well choreographed with the home staff ready and able to accept the returning detainees.

The detainees and staff were unanimously happy to be back in Houston.

The entire Houston staff performed in an exemplary fashion and should be proud of their response to this terrible natural disaster.



CDR John Gary, flight planning



LCDR Dutton managing mental healthcare

Miami, FL:

Gerardo Vazquez

Pearsall, TX:

Timothy Kiniiry

Pinal, AZ:

Lisa Bero

Corissa Coolbaugh

Guillermo Estrada

Maribel Neufeld

San Diego, CA:

Edward Birdsong

Alan Condon

Taylor, TX:

April Phillips

Varick, NY:

Marie Doninelli

Willacy, TX:

Alma De Leon

Laura Maciel

Valrie Simoes

WELCOME ALL NEW STAFF!