Disaster Medicine — Humanitarian Medicine
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World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine and the International Association for Humanitarian Medicine

Disaster unfortunately, and help fortunately, are as old as humanity. As long as man has had a beating heart, some adrenaline, and a reflex for protection, he has had compassion and an urge to assist those in distress. Historically, assistance in emergencies has evolved from early wound dressing and pain relief, to specialized techniques like emergency medical services and Disaster Medicine; to institutionalized mechanisms like the Red Cross to concepts, like disaster prevention, and socio-political arrangements, like Humanitarian Medicine.

Fundamental developments now are taking place in disaster management:
1) Disasters no longer are considered fatalistic phenomena, but rather foreseeable and preventable events;
2) Those who provide assistance now do so not as a gesture of sympathy, but as a duty;
3) The stricken communities and nations are claiming relief not as a charity, but as a right;
4) Health is perceived not as a luxury, but as a human right;
5) Disaster aid is seen not as an ad hoc repair episode, but as an essential factor in long-term development.
6) The donor community comprehends relief not as a magnanimous contribution, but as humanitarian obligation;
7) Armed forces of traditional combat function are being recycled for peacekeeping and peace-making missions;
8) The medical community that had long felt the spirit of the human factor, is calling Disaster Medicine, Humanitarian Medicine; and
9) The International Association for Humanitarian Medicine has been founded.

These constitute a quantum leap forward in human medical and international relations.

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Urban Search and Rescue: A New Tool for Canadian Emergency Humanitarian Assistance
Roberto Gonzales