

In the Spotlight

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Emergency Preparedness Drill Educates Health Care Students

In mid-March Athens witnessed the first interdisciplinary disaster preparedness drill designed for students in four healthcare units associated with the University of Georgia. Spearheaded by the UGA College of Pharmacy, the four-hour event included some 172 students from the College of Pharmacy, the College of Veterinary Medicine and the Augusta University/UGA Nursing and Medicine programs who took on roles as medical personnel and another 40 students as simulated victims. Thirty UGA and Augusta University faculty and staff as well as community instructors from Athens Regional Medical Center and the Clarke County Emergency Management Agency also participated in various capacities. The coordinating committee consisted of four College of Pharmacy faculty including Catherine White, Trina von Waldner, Deanna McEwen, and Ashley Hannings.

"Interdisciplinary education is required in the pharmacy curriculum as part of the College's accreditation," said Trina von Waldner, director of the College's continuing education and outreach programs and one of the organizers of the event. "This mock exercise provides our students and faculty with vital skills should a disaster occur and also helps fulfill our mission as a top level pharmacy school."

All pharmacy students are required to participate in disaster preparedness exercises, she noted, but interprofessional education exercises are new. The health professions students learn about preparation and planning, incident management, safety and security, triage and treatment, and evacuation. Ten teams with 16-17 members each alternately worked in both administrative and clinical drill scenarios that emphasized the importance of learning to work as an interprofessional team.

"Teamwork is a vital expectation in any healthcare practice," noted von Waldner, adding that each drill situation is created from the original emergency situation that involved the accidental release of chlorine gas on a city street near the Health Sciences campus. White indicated that this exercise also served to introduce students to community resources that are vital to emergency response.

Five administrative stations were set up to prepare for hospital surge, supply information on antidote stockpiles for chemical and biological events, man a community call center and provide transport for medical care. An additional five clinical drill centers focused on communication devices, triage for mass casualty victims, walk-in clinics, responder care and decontamination for humans and pets.



Three pharmacy students were among those who took calls during the drill.



Injured patients are evaluated in the triage area.