

ARCHIVE NEWS RELEASE

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NIH Opens Up Medical Consultation Line to Patients Affected by Hurricane Katrina

Bethesda, Maryland — The National Institutes of Health today announced that it is expanding its round-the-clock telephone medical consultation service previously available to health care providers to all patients affected by Hurricane Katrina. Medical experts at NIH, academic medical centers and the nation's medical professional societies are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide medical consultations on a wide array of medical problems. The toll-free number is 1-866-887-2842.

"The medical needs of those in the Gulf Coast region are enormous and we mobilized immediately to offer this service for our colleagues providing care in often difficult situations," said NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D. "Our goal is to match national experts with care providers dealing with difficult or complicated medical cases. We also want to help patients in the affected area who were on clinical trials and receiving treatment."

Consultations are available in environmental/toxic concerns, infectious diseases, tropical/geographical medicine, ophthalmology, oral medicine, psychiatry, cardiac/pulmonary diseases, genetic diseases, pediatric endocrinology, pediatric metabolism, obstetrics/gynecology, cancer and adult endocrinology.

"If a consultation is needed in other areas, we'll make the connections," said Dr. John I. Gallin, director of the NIH Clinical Center and consultation project coordinator. "Our partners at the nation's academic medical centers have generously volunteered their expertise in this initiative, and many medical societies have mobilized their membership to provide clinical advice as needed."

So far consultation requests have ranged from questions about drug dosages for treatment of tuberculosis to the need for prophylactic antibiotics for evacuees being seen in an emergency room, he noted. Physicians caring for patients on NIH-sponsored clinical trials that have been interrupted because of the Katrina disaster-or clinical trial patients themselves-can call the consultation line for options on continuing therapy under a clinical trial. "Our commitment is to do what we can to help protect the lives and health of patients," said Dr. Gallin.

For more information about NIH responses to the Katrina disaster, go to the NIH website, <http://www.nih.gov>. More details for cancer patients, their families, and physicians are on the National Cancer Institute's website, <http://www.cancer.gov/katrina>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — The Nation's Medical Research Agency — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov>.