

More surgeons are needed in response to disasters

S. William Gunn

The health profession has an honourable record in responding to disasters. From many international disasters and conferences that I have attended I have noted that surgeons tend to be a relative minority among doctors coming to help. But I must immediately correct this by saying that the Japanese disaster response remains a happy exception, as many of you here are surgeons, and distinguished disaster surgeons at that.

In fact surgery is an absolute necessity in most emergencies. This is so not only in acute, immediate disasters, but also in "chronic" disasters, as in most poor countries, where medical help is sadly lacking, and more so, surgical help. At least essential surgery should be provided in all health care, and more disaster responders should be experienced in delivering the essential surgical care; as in the example of your country.

Long neglected in WHO, in 2015 the Organization finally acknowledged the importance of surgery within total health care , including, of course, in disaster situations (Resolution 68.15) This gives more importance and relevance to our work, and I invite all surgeons to participate more actively in disaster response. APCDM can be a legitimate leader.