

## RESPONSE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN A RADIATION EMERGENCY

Robert W. Gillespie, M.D.

My background is in the surgery of trauma and burns. I will discuss the role of emergency medical services in the care of patients with radiation exposure or injury.

Every state has an emergency medical service system with regional and local structures under a state director. Nationally, the AMA Commission on Emergency Medical Services, of which I am Chairman, has been established by the AMA Board of Trustees and is made up of representatives from 23 organizations, all having commitments to emergency medicine. More than a dozen physicians' organizations are represented, as are organizations involving nurses, emergency medical technicians, hospitals, and public health programs. The federal government is represented by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Transportation. Another organization intimately involved in emergency medical care is the American Burn Association, which has identified more than 125 burn facilities throughout the United States.

A program under development, the Advanced Burn Life Support Course, will provide physicians, nurses and allied health personnel in community hospitals with guidelines for managing patients during the first hours after they are injured by fire, chemicals, electricity or radiation. The program also will provide community hospitals with guidelines for management of radiation emergencies.

Each of you has a strong commitment to the prevention and management of radiation emergencies. I am not an expert in radiation emergencies, but I ask you now to take on the role of a physician or nurse in a small community hospital and assume that you have just enrolled in the Advanced Burn Life Support Course. I will confine my comments to the section on initial management of radiation emergencies. By assuming this role, you may learn what is essential for the initial care of radiation emergencies.

### RADIATION EMERGENCY PLANNING

We learned from the Three Mile Island episode some eight years ago that there may be zones of both intense and peripheral radiation and that hospitals within the intense area must have a response

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Chairman, AMA Commission on Emergency Medical Services, Lincoln, Nebraska.