



## Diabolical, Haunting Terror – Here and Now

Joshua Shemer MD<sup>1</sup> and Yehuda Shoenfeld MD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Directorate, Maccabi Healthcare Services; and Israeli Center for Technology Assessment in Health Care, Gertner Institute for Epidemiology and Health Policy Research, Tel Hashomer, Israel

<sup>2</sup> Department of Medicine B and Research Center for Autoimmune Diseases, Sheba Medical Center, Tel-Hashomer, Israel  
Affiliated to Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Israel

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On 11 September 2001 the world changed irrevocably. The unfathomable reality of the ruthless and inhuman annihilation of the lives of young and old, close and afar, at any moment in time has strewn havoc on the very fiber of society and public health – regional, national and global. The terrorism of today wields conventional and non-conventional weapons of mass destruction – biologic, chemical and nuclear – that damage the body, the mind and the soul.

We must prepare for the offensive with knowledge and technology to confront this modern monster. Knowledge of the enemy, his tools, and our own fears are essentially combined with technological innovations to enable the medical community to activate preventive and protective measures (such as vaccination), alerts, and preparedness including extensive training for medical staff, diagnosis, treatment, containment and surveillance. Appropriate funding, research and development are essential to enable flexible and versatile responses to the expected unimaginable.

Information and communications are integral elements of deployment. Since September 11 the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued revised directives and updates via telebriefings, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* publications [1–3], and broadcasts for both the medical community (physicians, laboratories) and the general public. Leading medical journals provide important medical updates, such as articles in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, including consensus statements on anthrax and biologic warfare [4,5], articles in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on smallpox, bioterrorism and public health issues [6], and a special issue devoted to terrorism in the *British Medical Journal* [7].

Funds have been appropriated around the world in preparedness for terrorist casualties. In the USA, the Department of Health and Human Services made US\$ 140 million in emergency funds available to healthcare organizations that suffered losses as a result of the September 11 attacks. In May 2002 [8], the Department of Health and Human Services announced 12 grants worth \$10.5 million to fund research and training to address health concerns in the wake of the events of September 11. A total of \$6 million has

been allocated for education and training efforts, and \$4.5 million assigned to support research organizations' efforts to conduct exposure assessment, epidemiology, and community outreach in lower Manhattan. The House and Senate of the U.S. passed the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act (H.R. 3448) [9]. The bioterrorism bill includes:

- \$300 million to upgrade the CDC's laboratories and equipment
- Development of a national database to track biologic agents and toxins
- \$1.1 billion to build medicine and vaccine stockpiles
- \$1.5 billion in state and local grants to improve the public health system's ability to respond to an attack.

The satanic forces of terrorism have necessitated the diversion of enormous resources. Instead of investing in the promotion of health, the eradication of disease and the utilization of sophisticated medical technology for the benefit of people throughout the world, we are forced to dedicate billions in monetary terms as well as untold human efforts to counteract the plots of terror. The medical community of the world has a major role to play in the primary prevention of terror, destroying its roots throughout the world and minimizing the damages.

In the November edition of *IMAJ* we published an editorial: "Terror and medicine – the challenge" [10], which provided a brief outlook on the medical reaction to terror. The present special issue of the *Israel Medical Association Journal* broadens the spectrum and represents part of the preparedness of Israeli medical systems to confront non-conventional warfare. Various aspects of non-conventional hazards are presented. It should be noted that in May 2002 we published a special issue on the subject in *Harefuah*, the *Israel Medical Association's* Hebrew journal. Entitled "Biological and Chemical Terror: Ways of Coping," that supplement presents in-depth articles on biologic threats such as anthrax, plague, botulism, smallpox, and others.

Israel, regrettably, is not unfamiliar with terrorism. We have sadly learned from the experience gained from decades of terror attacks

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CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

against civilians, the chemical threat of the 1991 Gulf War, and the recent wave of suicide bombers. With these two special publications of the Israel Medical Association, we contribute to the international medical community's store of knowledge in the hope that, together, we will combat the monster. Our resilience and survival depend on cooperative global resources – financial, intellectual, and spiritual.

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**Correspondence:** Dr. J. Shemer, Director General, Maccabi Healthcare Services, P.O. Box 50493, Tel Aviv 68125, Israel.  
Phone: (972-3) 514-3511  
Fax: (972-3) 510-2165  
email: shemer\_s@mac.org.il