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Biological Terrorism Preparing to Meet the Threat

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Abstract

The threat of terrorists using biological warfare agents has received increased attention in recent years. Despite the hope that, with the right mix of policies, security measures, and intelligence gathering, a major biological warfare terrorist attack can be prevented, the history of conventional terrorism indicates otherwise. The greatest payoff in combating biological terrorism lies in focusing on how best to respond to a terrorist attack. The medical and emergency service communities will play the most important role in that process. Ensuring that they are trained to recognize the symptoms of diseases caused by biological warfare agents and have Critical Incident Stress Debriefing teams available to help them cope with the emotional aspects of treating exposed survivors should be part of contingency planning. By improving our readiness to respond to biological

terrorism, many lives can be saved and terrorists denied their goal of creating panic and crisis throughout the country.

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