



September 30, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

It has been a week since the destructive winds and rains of a category 4 hurricane made landfall in Puerto Rico. There are 3.5 million American citizens on the island without basic resources. Puerto Rico has a large psychiatric patient population, many of them homeless, medically indigent, and without social supports. Experience with other natural disasters in the US has taught us that psychiatric patients generally terminate treatment during these acute periods and it is essential that we have the resources to effectively treat them. Most psychiatry outpatient clinics have been forced to close, only a few partial hospitals have remained open and our inpatient units are operating with scarce resources.

The University of Puerto Rico (UPR) Carolina Hospital serves as the main training site for our Psychiatry residency program. We serve patients in our emergency department, general medicine floors and we have a 20 bed inpatient and an 8 bed stabilization unit. We are working under a contingency plan, without power and with the use of generators with limited fuel availability. Medical supplies and basic needs such as food and water for our patients and staff are being carefully rationed.

Despite conditions, it has been remarkable to see the commitment of our colleagues and psychiatry residents who are sacrificing their limited personal resources in order to serve our patients. As of now, we are finding that patients are arriving at hospitals without articles of basic need such as clothes and those used for personal hygiene; many of them have lost their homes. We are also concerned about a future need for psychotropic medications as resources become scarcer and we begin to do outreach in our multiple refuges throughout the island. We would gratefully accept donations and have included an attachment with supplies needed.

Sincerely,

Lillian Segarra, MD
Chair of Psychiatry, UPR