



## To Human Resilience

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**W**e have Harold Ginzburg, MD, JD, MPH, and his contributing authors to thank for this month's series on the impact of one of our greatest natural disasters, the land-fall of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama on August 29, 2005. As we know, such disasters — and the trauma, loss, disruption of services, and dislocation they provide — magnify the weaknesses to which we humans are heirs. We who deal with the emotional and behavioral frailties of humanity are called upon to respond with our basic skills and understanding to both the afflicted and the first responders who are called upon to rescue them, while later trying to learn from the chaos we have witnessed to be able to promote a more effective response to the next crisis.

This issue, which covers aspects of the mental health impact of the Ka-

trina disaster and the stresses faced by heroic first responders, teaches the rest of us for the time when it is our turn to cope and to respond in the most helpful way we can.

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Those who have read prior comments in previous issues of *Psychiatric Annals* may have detected my preoccupation with the limitations (design flaws) of our humanity, as well as a concern that we develop and appreciate some of our gifts — the miracle of consciousness, capacity for compassion, empathy, and love, as well as creativity and imagination.

The unfolding tale of Katrina and its aftermath brings our limitations, but especially our capacity for resilience, into vivid reality. Some of the writers of these articles modestly belie their own resilience as they describe experiencing a situation that is difficult for the rest of us to grasp in its magnitude. We learn lessons about maximizing resilience in those we are trying to help. We learn what an important quality resilience is for all of us when chaos and destruction suddenly and unexpectedly invade our lives.

We need more attention to the further development of resilience in those we serve as well as ourselves, as we strive to improve our ability to combat disabling and painful symptoms. Learning techniques for developing strengths and resilience in our patients may prove increasingly effective as we treat their disorders.