PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Identify important disaster research questions
- Improve researchers’ access to data collection tools
- Improve researchers’ capability to quickly collect health research data
- Integrate Disaster Research Response (DR2) into planning and emergency response systems
- Create a comprehensive disaster research process that includes public health, academia, emergency management, and affected workers and communities
- Develop the Rapid Acquisition of Pre- and Post-IIncident Disaster Data (RAPIDD) pre-positioned protocol

METHODS

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the National Library of Medicine (NLM) developed a program to improve and enhance biomedical research following disasters and public health emergencies.

- Evaluation of a long-standing need for clinical research in disasters (e.g., H1N1 experience)
- Creation of a Public Health Emergency Research Review Board (PHERRB)
- Report with ten recommendations to improve disaster research
- Review of research as part of public health emergency response efforts

RESULTS

NLM and NIEHS presented a framework for research on the medical and public health aspects of disasters and public health emergencies. The framework includes:

- A repository of data collection tools.
  Includes custom metadata to standardize the repository, improve retrieval, and aid researchers’ selection of tools.
- Data collection protocols and IRB approval.
  NIEHS developed the RAPIDD data collection protocol and received pre-approval from the NIEHS IRB.
- Resources for disaster researcher deployment.
  e.g., training resources are available for preparing scientists to conduct research in the post-disaster field environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The DR2 program continues to improve the state of environmental health disaster research by:

- providing a central repository for disaster health research tools
- conducting exercises
- supporting a network of disaster “Research Responders”

DR2’s success led to a transition from a pilot project to a full-fledged program that will have increased cross-cutting impact across programs at NIH.

DR2 aims to support the creation of a national disaster research framework that builds upon the existing emergency management infrastructure.