

**T**here is consensus that the frequency and intensity of natural disasters are on the rise. With the increasing world population, particularly in coastal areas, the human impact of these events is multiplied. Concurrently, the number of displaced populations and those living in refugee camps are at levels never seen before in history. There is record number of organizations providing medical and logistical humanitarian assistance for these people. While the impulse of helping fellow people in need is inherently human<sup>1</sup>, given the complexities of providing humanitarian aid, specialized training and careful coordination and organization is essential to effectively manage any response. In this special edition of the journal the authors will discuss the history of disaster medicine and humanitarian aid, as well as particular topics related to the organization of care in disasters and humanitarian operations such as issues related to matching resources to need. While the scope of this special issue is limited, the manuscripts cover a broad overview while providing specific content which can be used as starting point for health care providers who are interested in this topic. We would like to acknowledge the BIARI program at the Watson Institute at Brown University and the grant funding provided to support this effort.

1-“But really, they did it because every human being has a basic instinct to help each other out. It might not seem that way sometimes, but it’s true.

If a hiker gets lost in the mountains, people will coordinate a search. If a train crashes, people will line up to give blood. If an earthquake levels a city, people all over the world will send emergency supplies. This is so fundamentally human that it’s found in every culture without exception. Yes, there are assholes who just don’t care, but they’re massively outnumbered by the people who do. And because of that, I had billions of people on my side.”

*Excerpt From: Weir, Andy. “The Martian.” Broadway Books, 2014.*

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