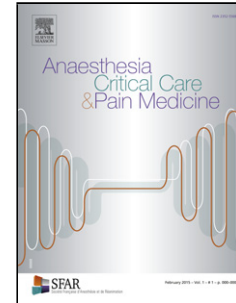


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Comments on: Reducing the Risks of Nuclear War—The Role of Health Professionals

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Comments:

ACCPM has decided to publish the editorial entitled “Reducing the Risks of Nuclear War—The Role of Health Professionals” recently written by Editors in Chief of the most prominent medical journals [1]. In this editorial, the authors highlighted the risk of nuclear war and made the case for supporting efforts to reduce its near-term risks.

The Editorial Board (EB) of ACCPM would like to emphasize two key viewpoints:

1) Is it the responsibility of healthcare professionals, especially as members of an Editorial Board, to discuss politics, diplomacy, and military options?

Obviously, NO. We are not experts and nor do we carry any legitimacy and authority in these areas. Our primary responsibility as healthcare professionals is to improve patient care, and patient health, including public health. As during the pandemic of COVID-19, we often deal with the consequence of political decisions, such as healthcare policies, healthcare costs, and access to care, directly impact our field. However, it is also argued that healthcare professionals should avoid taking political stances to maintain credibility with all patients. Moreover, professionals should be prudent not to delve into fields where we lack formal education or training. In addition, the point of view of healthcare professionals on such a complicated topic may differ, and it is the role of the EB to respect everyone’s opinion [2]

2) Is it the responsibility of health professionals to raise awareness and promote preparedness surrounding risks associated with nuclear weapons?

Undoubtedly, YES. As discussed in the editorial, even a “limited” use of nuclear weapons could kill up to 120 million people instantaneously. It would likely cause global climate disruption with a secondary risk of nuclear famine, endangering up to 2 billion people [3,4]. In a recent editorial published after the G7 meeting in Hiroshima (May 19-21, 2023), Hirohashi et al. [5] reminded us that any nuclear radiation could cause both "direct" and "indirect" victims, affecting both victims and healthcare professionals working under such extreme conditions. Furthermore, healthcare professionals could be involved in the care of patients exposed to radiation after an incident or an

attack on a nuclear power plant. Our Japanese colleagues in Hiroshima clearly showed that we must prepare for such a disaster [5].

While we've recently learned how disruptive a viral pandemic can be to the most advanced and matured healthcare systems [6], we have to realize that the impact of any form of nuclear war would likely be orders of magnitude more important.

As human beings, global citizens, and healthcare professionals, we need to stand and warn about the existential threats to humanity and our entire planet in case of a nuclear confrontation. While we may not be qualified to advocate the solutions for the conflict, our voices are crucial in highlighting the risks.

In conclusion, and echoing another ACCPM editorial published at the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict, we would like to reiterate that “war is the only enemy.”, and this holds true even more if nuclear weapons are used [7]. Everyone's perspectives and efforts are indispensable to avoid such a catastrophe.

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