Case Vignette 1: Pre-disaster planning for Alzheimer’s caregiver

Hurricane Charley is expected to strike Florida in approximately 24 hours. Susan Munoz is responsible for her 87-year-old father, Jose Munoz, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease 3 years ago. The TV is on and the weather broadcaster is urging people to evacuate the area. Mr. Munoz is agitated, disoriented, and keeps repeating, “Where are you taking me? I don’t want to leave home. I want to stay.”

Ms. Munoz is unsure where the emergency shelter is located. She anticipates that the shelter will be loud, chaotic, and teeming with people. This environment would definitely exacerbate her father’s distress. Her mother, who passed away 2 months ago, had been her father’s primary caregiver. New as a caregiver, Ms. Munoz realizes when packing that she has only 3 days’ worth of her father’s incontinence products and a limited supply of his numerous medications. The main thought playing over and over in her head is, “No one prepared me for this.”

– How could Ms. Munoz have helped her father better prepare?
– What should she add to an emergency preparedness kit that is tailored to his illness and needs?
– How could she manage her father’s agitation and distress?
– What other challenges might she experience as a result of an evacuation?
– How could she deal with the potential for her father to wander in an unfamiliar location?
– What kinds of self-care techniques could Ms. Munoz use to manage her own stress?