

DR. DAJER'S 911 ACCOUNT OF EVENTS

An overhead page came through NYU Downtown Hospital just before 9 a.m. calling respiratory techs to the ER. A nurse said an American Airlines jet had hit the towers. We knew then it was going to be an enormous disaster. We had about 10 minutes to pull IVs, scalpels, things like that.

Then, I can only describe it as an avalanche of injured people rushing through the door. We set things up so that patients were looked at first in the ambulance bay, which is big and right off the sidewalk at the entrance to the ER.

We'd immediately pick out the most critical and get them back to the surgical area. The less critical would go into another area, and so on. Soon the bay was filled with stretchers, as was the hallway and the cafeteria, where we had made surgical stations. As that filled up, we moved up to the next floor.

We saw a lot of deep traumas to the body, mostly from falling debris. It was shocking to see so many badly injured. Then the burn patients started coming in — I'd never seen so many all at once.

There was one woman who was so badly burned she was frozen like a wooden statue, but she was conscious and fully awake. I was thinking, "What do I do here? Where do I put in IVs?"

She couldn't talk; probably every nerve ending was destroyed, and I hope she was beyond feeling anything. I like to think that was the case.

I knew she was doomed, but we still had to try everything. We finally got a central vein in her chest, and then we were able to help her breathe. The overriding goal was to get her some morphine and diminish her pain. Some doctors will argue that you shouldn't waste resources when there's no chance of survival, but to me that would be criminal.

What I'm proudest of is that amid the horror and chaos, everyone in the hospital stood their ground. Above all else, not one patient was missed.