

## Road traffic accidents: Field management

Trauma is the single commonest cause of death for individual under the age of forty, and the third commonest cause of death at all ages. It is well established that prompt, appropriate care for trauma victims in road accidents can save lives and shorten the time taken to recover from what may be devastating injuries. These patients are often young and resilient, and if optimally treated many will return to their normal lives.

The first few hours of their care is crucial to obtain this outcome and the overwhelmingly message is that mortality is directly related to the time taken for a patient to reach definitive surgical treatment.

After safeguarding first assessment of vital functions has to be done. Release and extrication of injured victims regarding the injury pattern is important. Prolonged entrapment should be avoided by currently available cutting and release equipment which has to be appropriately co-ordinated between firebrigades and the medical team. Special attention must be given in advanced airway care and volume-replacement. Complete assessment of the whole body after release is indicated following the ABC of trauma: A -airway (with cervical spine control), B – breathing, C – circulation, D – disability (assessment of neurological deficit), E – secondary survey of complete patient.

Field management of road traffic accident victims is a process where continuous assessment of the patient, airway management, volume-replacement, adequate pain-relief and splintage and pressure techniques for external blood loss must have special attention. Site-to-hospital-times must be held as short as possible. This needs extended trained ambulance personnel and/or experienced flying squad teams. The establishment of regional trauma centres with adequate diagnostic and therapeutic facilities is essential.

Especially in more remote areas air rescue systems could make an important contribution to achieve short out-of-hospital-times and to bring every trauma patient to a trauma center.

Dr. med. Jörg Braun, M.D.  
Medical director  
German Air Rescue