

Emergency Medical Services Professionals in South Carolina Receive Critical Trauma Training

Issue

South Carolina's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel are eyewitnesses to the outcome of horrific traffic accidents that occur every day on our state's highways. In 2004, 51,226 injuries were attributed to traffic crashes with 1,046 deaths. Incredibly, a traffic crash that resulted in injury was recorded every 16.2 minutes on South Carolina's highways in 2004. The estimated economic cost of this is a staggering \$2.62 billion dollars.

A disproportionate number of highway deaths and injuries in 2004 occurred on secondary roads in rural areas of the state. Response to multi-trauma crashes in these rural areas is the responsibility of rural EMS systems that are often understaffed and ill equipped because of tax base inadequacies.

Intervention

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Division of EMS, in alliance with four regional EMS training institutions in the state, is leading an effort to provide trauma specific training to EMS personnel primarily in the state's rural areas. The Division of EMS also inspects ambulance units throughout the state to make certain that essential equipment is onboard and functional. South Carolina allocates a crucial \$179,304 in funding from the PHHS Block Grant to fund the program.

Notable achievements during the Block Grant Period included:

- Three hundred and sixty-six (366) EMS personnel, primarily from rural areas, were trained in trauma specific courses such as Basic Trauma Life Support (BTLS) and Pre-hospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS).
- One hundred and forty-three (143) EMS personnel were trained and certified at the level of Emergency Medical Technician-Intermediate, a certification level specifically designed to equip EMS personnel to recognize and treat trauma-related injuries.
- Four hundred and twenty (420) ambulances were inspected during the period for compliance with equipment and sanitation standards. All EMS services are held to the same high standards.
- Two mandatory informational workshops were conducted during the period for Medical Control Physicians in the state. The workshops serve to update physicians on their responsibilities in the day-to-day operations of their respective EMS services.

Impact

South Carolina's EMS professionals make decisions every day that may mean the difference between life and death. Although a paramedic may respond to dozens of critical trauma calls, he or she can always know that a young mother, father or child can survive because of the training that EMS professional received.

The actions of a paramedic in Beaufort County South Carolina in July 2005 are a good measure of the impact of training provided by the PHHS Block Grant. Paramedic Danny Tinnel responded to a two-vehicle crash on Highway 17 in Beaufort County. One individual was dead at the scene, and the other patient, although restrained, had rib fractures, femur fractures, altered mental status and difficulty breathing. Paramedic Tinnel did a rapid BTLS assessment and quickly realized that this patient would require immediate transport to a trauma center. He provided care until a helicopter arrived. The patient was transported to a local trauma center and survived.

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