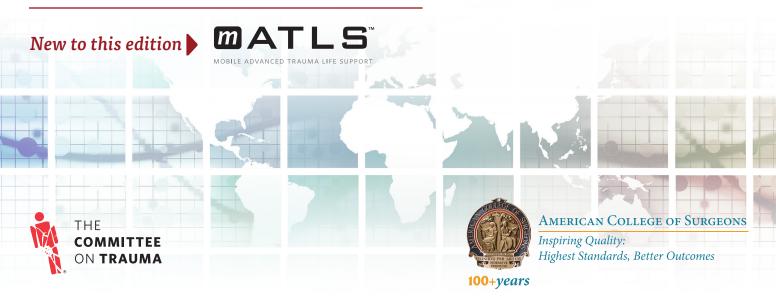


# ATLS<sup>®</sup> Advanced Trauma Life Support<sup>®</sup>

# **Student Course Manual**



**TENTH EDITION** 

# **ATLS<sup>®</sup>** Advanced Trauma Life Support<sup>®</sup>

# **Student Course Manual**





American College of Surgeons

Inspiring Quality: Highest Standards, Better Outcomes

**100**+*years* 

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Tenth Edition

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The American College of Surgeons, its Committee on Trauma, and contributing authors have taken care that the doses of drugs and recommendations for treatment contained herein are correct and compatible with the standards generally accepted at the time of publication. However, as new research and clinical experience broaden our knowledge, changes in treatment and drug therapy may become necessary or appropriate. Readers and participants of this course are advised to check the most current product information provided by the manufacturer of each drug to be administered to verify the recommended dose, the method and duration of administration, and contraindications. It is the responsibility of the licensed practitioner to be informed in all aspects of patient care and determine the best treatment for each individual patient. Note that cervical collars and spinal immobilization remain the current Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) standard in transporting patients with spine injury. If the collars and immobilization devices are to be removed in controlled hospital environments, this should be accomplished when the stability of the injury is assured. Cervical collars and immobilization devices have been removed in some of the photos and videos to provide clarity for specific skill demonstrations. The American College of Surgeons, its Committee on Trauma, and contributing authors disclaim any liability, loss, or damage incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use and application of any of the content of this 10th edition of the ATLS Program.

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# DEDICATION

We dedicate the Tenth Edition of ATLS to the memory of Dr. Norman E. McSwain Jr. His dynamic, positive, warm, friendly, and uplifting approach to getting things done through his life's work is a constant inspiration to those whose lives he touched. His tenure with the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma (COT) spanned almost exactly the same 40 years of the ATLS course.

Dr. McSwain's time with the COT led him down a path where, without a doubt, he became the most important surgical advocate for prehospital patient care. He first worked to develop, and then led and championed, the Prehospital Trauma Life Support Course (PHTLS) as a vital and integral complement to ATLS. Combined, these two courses have taught more than 2 million students across the globe.

Dr. McSwain received every honor the COT could bestow, and as a last tribute, we are pleased to dedicate this edition of ATLS to his memory. The creators of this Tenth Edition have diligently worked to answer Dr. McSwain's most common greeting: "What have you done for the good of mankind today?" by providing you with the Advanced Trauma Life Support Course, 10th Edition, along with our fervent hope that you will continue to use it to do good for all humankind. Thank you, Dr. McSwain.

Sharon Henry, MD Karen Brasel, MD Ronald M. Stewart, MD, FACS



# FOREWORD

My first exposure to Advanced Trauma Life Support<sup>®</sup> (ATLS®) was in San Diego in 1980 while I was a resident. The instructor course was conducted by Paul E. "Skip" Collicott, MD, FACS, and fellow students included a young surgeon in San Diego, A. Brent Eastman, MD, FACS, and one from San Francisco, Donald D. Trunkey, MD, FACS. Over the next year or two, we trained everyone in San Diego, and that work became the language and glue for the San Diego Trauma System. The experience was enlightening, inspiring, and deeply personal. In a weekend, I was educated and had my confidence established: I was adept and skilled in something that had previously been a cause of anxiety and confusion. For the first time, I had been introduced to an "organized course," standards for quality, validated education and skills training, and verification of these skills. It was a life-transforming experience, and I chose a career in trauma in part as a result. During that weekend, I also was introduced to the American College of Surgeons-at its verv best.

The Tenth Edition of ATLS continues a tradition of innovation. It takes advantage of electronic delivery and by offering two forms of courses (traditional and electronic) to increase the reach and effectiveness of this landmark course. Just about to celebrate its 40th anniversary and currently used in over 60 countries, the ATLS program and its delivery through the Tenth Edition will continue to foster safe trauma practices for the world at large.

Under the leadership of Sharon Henry, MD, FACS, the ATLS Committee Chair, and Monique Drago, MA, EdD, the Trauma Education Program Manager, along with excellent college staff, we have been able to evolve the program, building on the foundation laid in the Ninth Edition by Karen Brasel, MD, FACS, and Will Chapleau, EMT-P, RN, TNS. The Tenth Edition of the ATLS program takes the finest achievements of the American College of Surgeons and its Fellows to the next level, and ultimately patient care is the greatest beneficiary.

David B. Hoyt, MD, FACS Executive Director American College of Surgeons Chicago, Illinois United States The year 1976 was key for improving the care of the injured patient. In that year, orthopedic surgeon Dr. James Styner and his family were tragically involved in a plane crash in a Nebraska cornfield. The largely unprepared medical response by those caring for Dr. Styner and his family subsequently compelled him to action. Dr. Styner joined forces with his colleague, Dr. Paul "Skip" Collicott MD, FACS, and began a course entitled Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS). Today this initially small course has become a global movement. ATLS was quickly adopted and aggressively promulgated by the Committee on Trauma. The first course was held in 1980, and since that time ATLS has been diligently refined and improved year after year, decade after decade. More than a million students have been taught in more than 75 countries. From Nebraska to Haiti, more than 60% of ATLS courses are now taught outside North America.

It was also in 1976 that Don Trunkey, MD, FACS and the Committee on Trauma (COT) published Optimal Hospital Resources for Care of the Injured, the first document aimed at defining and developing trauma centers and trauma systems. This document led directly to the COT's Verification Review and Consultation (VRC) program and its 450 verified trauma centers across the United States. These two programs have transformed the care of injured patients across the globe, resulting in hundreds of thousands of lives saved. In an interesting twist, ATLS was intended as an educational program, and the VRC was intended to be a set of standards. But in real ways, ATLS standardized the care of trauma patients, and the VRC educated the trauma community on how to provide optimal care for trauma patients.

Thus 1976 heralded radical and positive change in the care of trauma patients. The Tenth Edition of ATLS is the most innovative and creative update since the inception of the ATLS course. I believe this edition is a fitting testament to the memory of those pioneers who, in their mind's eye, could see a path to a better future for the care of the injured. I congratulate the modern pioneers of this Tenth Edition. The development of this edition was led by a team with a similar commitment, zeal, and passion to improve. My hope is that all those taking and teaching ATLS will boldly continue this search to improve the care of the injured. In so doing, we may appropriately honor those pioneers of 1976.

# Ronald M. Stewart, MD, FACS

Chair of the ACS Committee on Trauma

# PREFACE

# ROLE OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS COMMITTEE ON TRAUMA

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) was founded to improve the care of surgical patients, and it has long been a leader in establishing and maintaining the high quality of surgical practice in North America. In accordance with that role, the ACS Committee on Trauma (COT) has worked to establish guidelines for the care of injured patients.

Accordingly, the COT sponsors and contributes to continued development of the Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) program. The ATLS Student Course does not present new concepts in the field of trauma care; rather, it teaches established treatment methods. A systematic, concise approach to the early care of trauma patients is the hallmark of the ATLS Program.

This Tenth Edition was developed for the ACS by members of the ATLS Committee and the ACS COT, other individual Fellows of the College, members of the international ATLS community, and nonsurgical consultants to the Committee who were selected for their special competence in trauma care and their expertise in medical education. (The Preface and Acknowledgments sections of this book contain the names and affiliations of these individuals.) The COT believes that the people who are responsible for caring for injured patients will find the information extremely valuable. The principles of patient care presented in this manual may also be beneficial to people engaged in the care of patients with nontrauma-related diseases.

Injured patients present a wide range of complex problems. The ATLS Student Course is a concise approach to assessing and managing multiply injured patients. The course supplies providers with comprehensive knowledge and techniques that are easily adapted to fit their needs. Students using this manual will learn one safe way to perform each technique. The ACS recognizes that there are other acceptable approaches. However, the knowledge and skills taught in the course are easily adapted to all venues for the care of these patients.

The ATLS Program is revised by the ATLS Committee approximately every four years to respond to changes in available knowledge and incorporate newer and perhaps even safer skills. ATLS Committees in other countries and regions where the program has been introduced have participated in the revision process, and the ATLS Committee appreciates their outstanding contributions.

# NEW TO THIS EDITION

This Tenth Edition of the Advanced Trauma Life Support Student Course Manual reflects several changes designed to enhance the educational content and its visual presentation.

#### **CONTENT UPDATES**

All chapters were rewritten and revised to ensure clear coverage of the most up-to-date scientific content, which is also represented in updated references. New to this edition are:

- Completely revised skills stations based on unfolding scenarios
- Emphasis on the trauma team, including a new Teamwork section at the end of each chapter and a new appendix focusing on Team Resource Management in ATLS
- Expanded Pitfalls features in each chapter to identify correlating preventive measures meant to avoid the pitfalls
- Additional skills in local hemorrhage control, including wound packing and tourniquet application
- Addition of the new Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS)
- An update of terminology regarding spinal immobilization to emphasize restriction of spinal motion
- Many new photographs and medical illustrations, as well as updated management algorithms, throughout the manual

#### MYATLS MOBILE APPLICATION



The course continues to make use of the MyATLS mobile application with both Universal iOS and Android compatibility. The app is full of useful reference content for retrieval at

the hospital bedside and for review at your leisure. Content includes:

- Interactive visuals, such as treatment algorithms and x-ray identification
- Just in Time video segments capturing key skills
- Calculators, such as pediatric burn calculator to determine fluid administration
- Animations, such as airway management and surgical cricothyroidotomy

Students, instructors, coordinators, and educators are encouraged to access and regularly use this important tool.

#### **SKILLS VIDEO**

As part of the course, video is provided via the MyATLS. com website to show critical skills that providers should be familiar with before taking the course. Skill Stations during the course will allow providers the opportunity to fine-tune skill performance in preparation for the practical assessment. A review of the demonstrated skills before participating in the skills stations will enhance the learner's experience.

# EDITORIAL NOTES

The ACS Committee on Trauma is referred to as the ACS COT or *the Committee*, and the State/Provincial Chair(s) is referred to as S/P Chair(s).

The international nature of this edition of the ATLS Student Manual may necessitate changes in the commonly used terms to facilitate understanding by all students and teachers of the program.

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# HONOR ROLL

Over the past 30 years, ATLS has grown from a local course training of Nebraska doctors to care for trauma patients to a family of trauma specialists from more than 60 countries who volunteer their time to ensure that our materials reflect the most current research and that our course is designed to improve patient outcomes. The Tenth Edition of ATLS reflects the efforts of the individuals who contributed to the first nine editions, and we honor them here:

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# COURSE OVERVIEW: PURPOSE, HISTORY, AND CONCEPTS OF THE ATLS PROGRAM

# PROGRAM GOALS

The Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) course supplies its participants with a safe and reliable method for the immediate treatment of injured patients and the basic knowledge necessary to:

- 1. Assess a patient's condition rapidly and accurately.
- 2. Resuscitate and stabilize patients according to priority.
- 3. Determine whether a patient's needs exceed the resources of a facility and/or the capability of a provider.
- 4. Arrange appropriately for a patient's interhospital or intrahospital transfer.
- 5. Ensure that optimal care is provided and that the level of care does not deteriorate at any point during the evaluation, resuscitation, or transfer process.

# COURSE OBJECTIVES

The content and skills presented in this course are designed to assist doctors in providing emergency care for trauma patients. The concept of the "golden hour" emphasizes the urgency necessary for successful treatment of injured patients and is not intended to represent a fixed time period of 60 minutes. Rather, it is the window of opportunity during which doctors can have a positive impact on the morbidity and mortality associated with injury. The ATLS course provides the essential information and skills for doctors to identify and treat life-threatening and potentially life-threatening injuries under the extreme pressures associated with the care of these patients in the fast-paced environment and anxiety of a trauma room. The ATLS course is applicable to clinicians in a variety of situations. It is just as relevant to providers in a large teaching facility in North America or Europe as it is in a developing nation with rudimentary facilities.

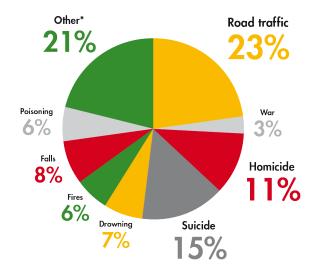
Upon completing the ATLS student course, the participant will be able to:

- 1. Demonstrate the concepts and principles of the primary and secondary patient assessments.
- 2. Establish management priorities in a trauma situation.
- 3. Initiate primary and secondary management necessary for the emergency management of acute lifethreatening conditions in a timely manner.
- 4. In a given simulation, demonstrate the following skills, which are often required during initial assessment and treatment of patients with multiple injuries:
  - a. Primary and secondary assessment of a patient with simulated, multiple injuries
  - b. Establishment of a patent airway and initiation of assisted ventilations
  - c. Orotracheal intubation on adult and infant manikins
  - d. Pulse oximetry and carbon dioxide detection in exhaled gas
  - e. Cricothyroidotomy
  - f. Assessment and treatment of a patient in shock, particularly recognition of lifethreatening hemorrhage
  - g. Intraosseous access
  - h. Pleural decompression via needle or finger and chest tube insertion
  - i. Recognition of cardiac tamponade and appropriate treatment
  - j. Clinical and radiographic identification of thoracic injuries
  - k. Use of peritoneal lavage, ultrasound (FAST), and computed tomography (CT) in abdominal evaluation
  - Evaluation and treatment of a patient with brain injury, including use of the new Glasgow Coma Scale score and CT of the brain

- m. Protection of the spinal cord and radiographic and clinical evaluation of spine injuries
- n. Musculoskeletal trauma assessment and management

# THE NEED

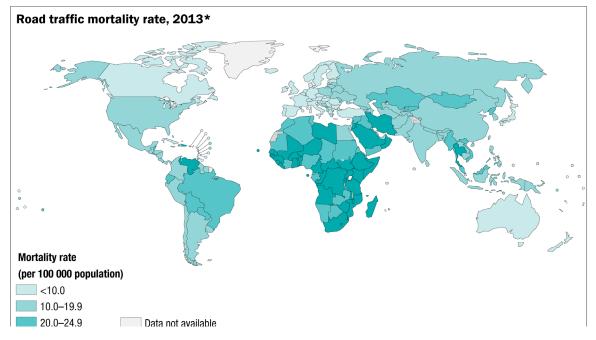
According to the most current information from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), more than nine people die every minute from injuries or violence, and 5.8 million people of all ages and economic groups die every year from unintentional injuries and violence (**FIGURE 1**). The burden of injury is even more significant, accounting for 18% of the world's total diseases. Motor vehicle crashes (referred to as road traffic injuries in **FIGURE 2**) alone cause more than 1 million deaths annually and an estimated 20 million to 50 million significant injuries; they are the leading cause of death due to injury worldwide. Improvements in injury control efforts are having an impact in most developed countries, where trauma remains the leading cause of death in persons 1 through 44 years of age. Significantly, more than 90% of motor vehicle crashes occur in the developing world. Injury-related deaths are expected to rise dramatically by 2020, and deaths due to motor vehicle crashes are projected to increase by 80% from current rates in lowand middle-income countries.



■ FIGURE 2 Distribution of global injury mortality by cause. "Other" category includes smothering, asphyxiation, choking, animal and venomous bites, hypothermia, and hyperthermia as well as natural disasters. Data from *Global Burden of Disease*, 2004. Reproduced with permission from *Injuries and Violence: The Facts.* Geneva: World Health Organization Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention; 2010.

# TRIMODAL DEATH DISTRIBUTION

First described in 1982, the trimodal distribution of deaths implies that death due to injury occurs in one of three periods, or peaks. *The first peak* occurs within



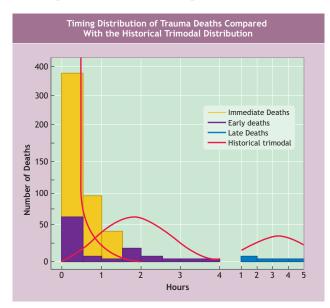
**FIGURE 1** Road traffic mortality rate, 2013. Reproduced with permission from *Global Health Observatory Map Gallery*. Geneva: World Health Organization Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention; 2016.

seconds to minutes of injury. During this early period, deaths generally result from apnea due to severe brain or high spinal cord injury or rupture of the heart, aorta, or other large blood vessels. Very few of these patients can be saved because of the severity of their injuries. Only prevention can significantly reduce this peak of trauma-related deaths.

The second peak occurs within minutes to several hours following injury. Deaths that occur during this period are usually due to subdural and epidural hematomas, hemopneumothorax, ruptured spleen, lacerations of the liver, pelvic fractures, and/or multiple other injuries associated with significant blood loss. The golden hour of care after injury is characterized by the need for rapid assessment and resuscitation, which are the fundamental principles of Advanced Trauma Life Support.

The third peak, which occurs several days to weeks after the initial injury, is most often due to sepsis and multiple organ system dysfunctions. Care provided during each of the preceding periods affects outcomes during this stage. The first and every subsequent person to care for the injured patient has a direct effect on long-term outcome.

The temporal distribution of deaths reflects local advances and capabilities of trauma systems. The development of standardized trauma training, better prehospital care, and trauma centers with dedicated trauma teams and established protocols to care for injured patients has altered the picture. **■** FIGURE 3 shows



■ FIGURE 3 Timing distribution of trauma deaths compared with the historical trimodal distribution. The black line represents the historical trimodal distribution, and the bars represent 2010 study data. Reprinted with permission from Gunst M, Ghaemmaghami V, Gruszecki A, et al. Changing epidemiology of trauma deaths leads to a bimodal distribution. *Proc (Baylor Univ Med Cent)*, 2010;23(4):349–354.

the timing distribution of trauma deaths compared with the historical trimodal distribution.

## HISTORY

The delivery of trauma care in the United States before 1980 was at best inconsistent. In February 1976, tragedy occurred that changed trauma care in the "first hour" for injured patients in the United States and in much of the rest of the world. An orthopedic surgeon was piloting his plane and crashed in a rural Nebraska cornfield. The surgeon sustained serious injuries, three of his children sustained critical injuries, and one child sustained minor injuries. His wife was killed instantly. The care that he and his family subsequently received was inadequate by the day's standards. The surgeon, recognizing how inadequate their treatment was, stated: "When I can provide better care in the field with limited resources than what my children and I received at the primary care facility, there is something wrong with the system, and the system has to be changed."

A group of private-practice surgeons and doctors in Nebraska, the Lincoln Medical Education Foundation, and the Lincoln area Mobile Heart Team Nurses, with the help of the University of Nebraska Medical Center, the Nebraska State Committee on Trauma (COT) of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), and the Southeast Nebraska Emergency Medical Services identified the need for training in advanced trauma life support. A combined educational format of lectures, lifesaving skill demonstrations, and practical laboratory experiences formed the prototype ATLS course.

A new approach to providing care for individuals who suffer major life-threatening injury premiered in 1978, the year of the first ATLS course. This prototype ATLS course was field-tested in conjunction with the Southeast Nebraska Emergency Medical Services. One year later, the ACS COT, recognizing trauma as a surgical disease, enthusiastically adopted the course under the imprimatur of the College and incorporated it as an educational program.

This course was based on the assumption that appropriate and timely care could significantly improve the outcome of injured patients. The original intent of the ATLS Program was to train doctors who do not manage major trauma on a daily basis, and the primary audience for the course has not changed. However, today the ATLS method is accepted as a standard for the "first hour" of trauma care by many who provide care for the injured, whether the patient is treated in an isolated rural area or a state-of the-art trauma center.

COURSE OVERVIEW

# ATLS AND TRAUMA SYSTEMS

As mentioned earlier, Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) was developed in 1976 following a plane crash in which several children were critically injured. They received injury care, but the resources and expertise they needed were not available. This was, unfortunately, typical of the way injury care was provided in most areas of the country. The creators of ATLS had seen how the coordinated efforts of well-trained providers improved survival of the seriously injured on the battlefields of Vietnam and at inner-city hospitals. Since then, ATLS-trained providers have been instrumental in the ongoing development of trauma systems. ATLS has played a major role in bringing together a core group of providers that are trained and focused on injury care. This core group has provided the leadership and the front-line clinical care that have enabled the growth and maturation of coordinated regional trauma systems.

Before the second half of the 20th century, trauma centers did not exist. Injury was thought to be unpredictable instead of something that could be anticipated and include treatment plans to care for injuries. Some large public hospitals, especially those located in areas with high rates of poverty and urban violence, began to demonstrate that focused experience and expertise—among providers as well as facilities—led to better outcomes after injury. Outside of these centers, injury care remained haphazard; it was provided by the closest facility and by practitioners who happened to be available. As a result, the quality of injury care received was largely a matter of chance. However, clear and objective data now show improved outcomes in designated trauma centers. The importance of trauma centers has been a core element of ATLS from its inception, and the dissemination of ATLS principles has contributed significantly to the general acceptance of this concept.

At about the same time, sweeping changes were also occurring in the emergency medical services (EMS) system. Before the 1960s, there were few standards regarding ambulance equipment or training of attendants. The ambulance was seen as a means of transporting patients, not an opportunity for practitioners to initiate care. Aided by the passage of the 1973 Emergency Medical Services Act, which established guidelines and provided funding for regional EMS development, EMS systems rapidly developed and matured over the next 25 years. The wartime experiences of Korea and Vietnam clearly demonstrated the advantages of rapid evacuation and early definitive treatment of casualties, and it became increasingly apparent how crucial it was to coordinate field treatment and transportation to ensure that injured

patients arrived at a capable trauma care facility. The notion of a trauma system began to take shape.

Initially, the conception of a trauma system focused on the large urban trauma centers. Drawing on the experience at Cook County Hospital in Chicago, the State of Illinois passed legislation establishing a statewide coordinated network of trauma centers in 1971. When the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medicine was established in 1973, it was the first operational statewide trauma system. Maryland's small size allowed for a system design in which all severely injured patients within the state were transported to a single dedicated trauma facility. Other regions used this model to establish cooperative networks of trauma centers that were connected by a coordinated EMS system and linked by shared quality improvement processes.

These efforts were driven by the finding that a large proportion of deaths after injury in nontrauma hospitals were due to injuries that could have been better managed and controlled. The implementation of such systems led to dramatic decreases in what was termed "preventable death," as well as overall improvements in postinjury outcome that were duplicated in widely varying geographic settings. Following the models established in Illinois and Maryland, these regional systems were founded on the premise that all critically injured patients should be transported to a trauma center and that other acute care facilities in a region would not have a role in the care of the injured. This pattern fit well with the core ATLS paradigm of the small, poorly resourced facility seeking to stabilize and transfer patients. Based on the "exclusion" of undesignated hospitals from the care of the injured, this approach is frequently referred to as the exclusive model of trauma system design.

The exclusive model works well in urban and suburban settings, where there are a sufficient number of trauma centers. Although often described as a regional system, it does not use the resources of all healthcare facilities in a region. This focuses patient volume and experience at the high-level centers, but it leads to attenuation of skills in undesignated centers and results in loss of flexibility and surge capacity. The only way to increase the depth of coverage in an exclusive system is to recruit or build additional trauma centers in areas of need. This theory has largely proven impossible in practice, due to the high startup costs for new trauma centers as well as a widely varying motivation and commitment to injury care across the spectrum of healthcare facilities. The limitations of the exclusive model. and the difficulties in deploying the model on a large scale, were experienced throughout the 1990s. Despite clear evidence of the benefit of trauma systems, very few states and regions were able to establish a system as a matter of governmental policy, and fewer still were able

to fulfill a set of eight criteria that had been proposed as cornerstones of exclusive system design. Consequently, inclusive models began to be implemented.

The inclusive model, as the name suggests, proposes that all healthcare facilities in a region be involved with the care of injured patients, at a level commensurate with their commitment, capabilities, and resources. Ideally, through its regulations, rules, and interactions with EMS, the system functions to efficiently match an individual patient's needs with the most appropriate facility, based on resources and proximity. Based on this paradigm, the most severely injured would be either transported directly or expeditiously transferred to the top-level trauma care facilities. At the same time, there would be sufficient local resources and expertise to manage the less severely injured, thus avoiding the risks and resource utilization incurred for transportation to a high-level facility. The notion that personnel highly skilled in trauma care would ever exist outside of the trauma center was not envisioned at the time that ATLS was created. Largely due to the success of ATLS, relatively sophisticated trauma capability is now commonly found outside of a traditional large urban center. This changing landscape has led to modifications in the content and focus of the ATLS course and its target audience. The inclusive system model has been the primary guiding framework for systems development over the last 10 years.

Despite its relatively universal acceptance at the theoretical level, the inclusive model is often misconstrued and misapplied in practice: it is viewed as a voluntary system in which all hospitals that wish to participate are included at whatever level of participation they choose. This approach fails to fulfill the primary mission of an inclusive trauma system: to ensure that the needs of the patient are the primary driver of resource utilization. An inclusive system ensures that all hospitals participate in the system and are prepared to care for injured patients at a level commensurate with their resources, capabilities, and capacity; but it does not mean that hospitals are free to determine their level of participation based on their own perceived best interest. The needs of the patient population served—objectively assessed—are the parameters that should determine the apportionment and utilization of system resources, including the level and geographic distribution of trauma centers within the system. When this rule is forgotten, the optimal function of systems suffers, and problems of either inadequate access or overutilization may develop.

The model of the inclusive trauma system has been well developed. There is substantial evidence to show the efficacy of these systems in improving outcomes after injury, but inclusive systems are undeniably difficult to develop, finance, maintain, and operate. The system has a scale and function that places it in the realm of essential public services, yet it operates within the largely market-driven world of healthcare delivery. In most areas, the public health dimensions of the trauma system are not well recognized and not well funded by states or regions. Lacking a federal mandate or federal funding, the responsibility to develop trauma systems has fallen to state and local governments, and progress highly depends on the interest and engagement of public leadership at that level. As a result, some states have well-organized and well-funded systems whereas others have made little success beyond a level of coordination that has developed through individual interactions between front-line providers. Though there is general agreement about the necessary elements and the structure of a trauma system, as well as significant evidence to demonstrate that coordination of these individual elements into a comprehensive system of trauma care leads to improved outcomes after injury, this data has not led to a broad implementation of trauma systems across the country.

From an international perspective, trauma system implementation varies to an even higher degree due to the broad range of social structures and economic development in countries across the globe. Further, many of the cultural and economic forces that have driven trauma systems development in the United States are unique, especially those related to high rates of interpersonal violence and the various ways of financing health care. As a result, approaches to trauma system development are very different.

In many higher-income nations, especially those where health care is already an integral part of the social support network, the benefits of focusing trauma care expertise within trauma centers have been more easily recognized. Moreover, there are fewer economic barriers to the direction of patient flow based on injury severity. Combined with the relatively smaller size of many European nations and the resultant shorter transport times to a specialty center, these benefits have facilitated the functional development of trauma systems following an exclusive model.

By contrast, most low- and middle-income countries have severely limited infrastructure for patient transportation and definitive care. These nations face severe challenges in providing adequate care for the injured, and in providing health care across the board. These challenges are clearly demonstrated by the disproportionately high rates of death related to injury seen in such countries. In these settings, ATLS has had perhaps its greatest impact on systems development, bringing knowledge and basic pathways of trauma care to directly to the providers, independent of the healthcare infrastructure. In addition, ATLS at its core brings forward many of the primary elements of a systematized approach to care, including the concept of transferring patients to more capable facilities as dictated by injury severity, and the importance of communication between providers at various levels of care. In many low- and middle-income countries, ATLS provides both the impetus to improve trauma care and the basic tools to begin to construct a system.

The broad success of ATLS, and the building of a large population of providers who understand the principles and approach to injury care, both in the United States and internationally, continues to be instrumental in furthering the implementation of trauma systems. The wide dissemination of knowledge regarding injury care and the importance of making the correct early decisions has established a common set of principles and a common language that serve to initiate changes in trauma care and act as a cohesive force bringing the various components of a system together. This group of providers committed to the care of the trauma patient, the far-flung ATLS family, is ultimately the source of the overall vision and cohesion necessary to drive improvements in systems of trauma care. They bind the many separate elements of an inclusive system into a functioning whole.

or experimental methods. The international nature of the program mandates that the course be adaptable to a variety of geographic, economic, social, and medical practice situations. To retain current status in the ATLS Program, an individual must reverify training with the latest edition of the materials.

In parallel with the ATLS course is the Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) course, sponsored by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT). The PHTLS course, developed in cooperation with the ACS COT, is based on the concepts of the ACS ATLS Program and is conducted for emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and nurses who are providers of prehospital trauma care.

Other courses have been developed with similar concepts and philosophies. For example, the Society of Trauma Nurses offers the Advanced Trauma Care for Nurses (ATCN), which is also developed in cooperation with the ACS COT. The ATCN and ATLS courses are conducted parallel to each other; the nurses audit the ATLS lectures and then participate in skill stations separate from the ATLS skill stations conducted for doctors. The benefits of having both prehospital and in-hospital trauma personnel speaking the same "language" are apparent.

# COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION

The ATLS course was conducted nationally for the first time under the auspices of the American College of Surgeons in January 1980. International promulgation of the course began in 1980.

The program has grown each year in the number of courses and participants. To date, the course has trained more than 1.5 million participants in more than 75,000 courses around the world. Currently, an average of 50,000 clinicians are trained each year in over 3,000 courses. The greatest growth in recent years has been in the international community, and this group currently represents more than half of all ATLS activity.

The text for the course is revised approximately every 4 years to incorporate new methods of evaluation and treatment that have become accepted parts of the community of doctors who treat trauma patients. Course revisions incorporate suggestions from members of the Subcommittee on ATLS; members of the ACS COT; members of the international ATLS family; representatives to the ATLS Subcommittee from the American College of Emergency Physicians and the American College of Anesthesiologists; and course instructors, coordinators, educators, and participants. Changes to the program reflect accepted, verified practice patterns, not unproven technology

# INTERNATIONAL DISSEMINATION

As a pilot project, the ATLS Program was exported outside of North America in 1986 to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The ACS Board of Regents gave permission in 1987 for promulgation of the ATLS Program in other countries. The ATLS Program may be requested by a recognized surgical organization or ACS Chapter in another country by corresponding with the ATLS Subcommittee Chairperson, care of the ACS ATLS Program Office, Chicago, Illinois. At the time of publication, the following 78 countries were actively providing the ATLS course to their trauma providers:

- 1. Argentina (Asociación Argentina de Cirugía)
- 2. Australia (Royal Australasian College of Surgeons)
- 3. Bahrain (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 4. Belize (College of Physicians and Surgeons of Costa Rica)
- 5. Bolivia (AMDA Bolivia)
- 6. Brazil (The Brazilian Committee on Trauma)
- 7. Canada (ACS Chapters and Provincial Committees on Trauma)

- 8. Chile (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 9. Colombia (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 10. Costa Rica (College of Physicians and Surgeons of Costa Rica)
- 11. Cuba (Brazilian Committee on Trauma)
- 12. Curaçao (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 13. Cyprus (Cyprus Surgical Society)
- 14. Czech Republic (Czech Trauma Society)
- 15. Denmark (ATLS Denmark Fond)
- 16. Ecuador (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 17. Egypt (Egyptian Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons)
- 18. Estonia (Estonia Surgical Association)
- 19. Fiji and the nations of the Southwest Pacific (Royal Australasian College of Surgeons)
- 20. France (Société Française de Chirurgie d'Urgence)
- 21. Georgia (Georgian Association of Surgeons)
- 22. Germany (German Society for Trauma Surgery and Task Force for Early Trauma Care)
- 23. Ghana (Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons)
- 24. Greece (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 25. Grenada (Society of Surgeons of Trinidad and Tobago)
- 26. Haiti (Partnership with Region 14)
- 27. Honduras (Asociacion Quirurgica de Honduras)
- 28. Hong Kong (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 29. Hungary (Hungarian Trauma Society)
- 30. India (Association for Trauma Care of India)
- 31. Indonesia (Indonesian Surgeons Association)
- 32. Iran (Persian Orthopedic and Trauma Association)
- 33. Ireland (Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland)
- 34. Israel (Israel Surgical Society)
- 35. Italy (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 36. Jamaica (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 37. Jordan (Royal Medical Services/NEMSGC)
- 38. Kenya (Surgical Society of Kenya)
- 39. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 40. Kuwait (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)

- 41. Lebanon (Lebanese Chapter of the American College of Surgeons)
- 42. Lithuania (Lithuanian Society of Traumatology and Orthopaedics)
- 43. Malaysia (College of Surgeons, Malaysia)
- 44. Mexico (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 45. Moldova (Association of Traumatologists and Orthopedics of Republic of Moldova ATORM)
- 46. Mongolia (Mongolian Orthopedic Association and National Trauma and Orthopedic Referral Center of Mongolia)
- 47. Myanmar (Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, International Federation for Emergency Medicine and Royal Australasian College Of Surgeons. The local stakeholders included the Myanmar Department of Health and Department of Medical Science).
- 48. Netherlands, The (Dutch Trauma Society)
- 49. New Zealand (Royal Australasian College of Surgeons)
- 50. Nigeria (Nigerian Orthopaedic Association)
- 51. Norway (Norwegian Surgical Society)
- 52. Oman (Oman Surgical Society)
- 53. Pakistan (College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan)
- 54. Panama (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 55. Papua New Guinea (Royal Australasian College of Surgeons)
- 56. Paraguay (Sociedad Paraguaya de Cirugía)
- 57. Peru (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 58. Philippines (Philippine College of Surgeons)
- 59. Portugal (Portuguese Society of Surgeons)
- 60. Qatar (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)
- 61. Republic of China, Taiwan (Surgical Association of the Republic of China, Taiwan)
- 62. Republic of Singapore (Chapter of Surgeons, Academy of Medicine)
- 63. Slovenia (Slovenian Society of Trauma Surgeons)
- 64. Republic of South Africa (South African Trauma Society)
- 65. Somoa (Royal Australasian College of Surgeons)
- 66. Spain (Spanish Society of Surgeons)
- 67. Sri Lanka (College of Surgeons, Sri Lanka)
- 68. Sweden (Swedish Society of Surgeons)

- 69. Switzerland (Swiss Society of Surgeons)
- 70. Syria (Center for Continuing Medical and Health Education)
- 71. Taiwan (Taiwan Surgical Association)
- 72. Thailand (Royal College of Surgeons of Thailand)
- 73. Trinidad and Tobago (Society of Surgeons of Trinidad and Tobago)
- 74. United Arab Emirates (Surgical Advisory Committee)
- 75. United Kingdom (Royal College of Surgeons of England)
- 76. United States, U.S. territories (ACS Chapters and State Committees on Trauma)
- 77. Uruguay (Uruguay Society of Surgery)
- 78. Venezuela (ACS Chapter and Committee on Trauma)

# THE CONCEPT

The concept behind the ATLS course has remained simple. Historically, the approach to treating injured patients, as taught in medical schools, was the same as that for patients with a previously undiagnosed medical condition: an extensive history including past medical history, a physical examination starting at the top of the head and progressing down the body, the development of a differential diagnosis, and a list of adjuncts to confirm the diagnosis. Although this approach was adequate for a patient with diabetes mellitus and many acute surgical illnesses, it did not satisfy the needs of patients suffering life-threatening injuries. The approach required change.

Three underlying concepts of the ATLS Program were initially difficult to accept:

- 1. Treat the greatest threat to life first.
- 2. Never allow the lack of definitive diagnosis to impede the application of an indicated treatment.
- 3. A detailed history is not essential to begin the evaluation of a patient with acute injuries.

The result was the development of the ABCDE approach to evaluating and treating injured patients. These concepts also align with the observation that the care of injured patients in many circumstances is a team effort that allows medical personnel with special skills and expertise to provide care simultaneously with surgical leadership of the process.

The ATLS course emphasizes that injury kills in certain reproducible time frames. For example, the loss of an airway kills more quickly than does loss of the ability to breathe. The latter kills more quickly than loss of circulating blood volume. The presence of an expanding intracranial mass lesion is the next most lethal problem. Thus, the mnemonic ABCDE defines the specific, ordered evaluations and interventions that should be followed in all injured patients:

Airway with restriction of cervical spine motion

**B**reathing

Circulation, stop the bleeding

Disability or neurologic status

**E**xposure (undress) and **E**nvironment (temperature control)

# THE COURSE

The ATLS course emphasizes the rapid initial assessment and primary treatment of injured patients, starting at the time of injury and continuing through initial assessment, lifesaving intervention, reevaluation, stabilization, and, when needed, transfer to a trauma center. The course consists of precourse and postcourse tests, core content, interactive discussions, scenario-driven skill stations, lectures, interactive case presentations, discussions, development of lifesaving skills, practical laboratory experiences, and a final performance proficiency evaluation. Upon completing the course, participants should feel confident in implementing the skills taught in the ATLS course.

### THE IMPACT

ATLS training in a developing country has resulted in a decrease in injury mortality. Lower per capita rates of deaths from injuries are observed in areas where providers have ATLS training. In one study, a small trauma team led by a doctor with ATLS experience had equivalent patient survival when compared with a larger team with more doctors in an urban setting. In addition, there were more unexpected survivors than fatalities.

There is abundant evidence that ATLS training improves the knowledge base, the psychomotor skills and their use in resuscitation, and the confidence and performance of doctors who have taken part in the program. The organization and procedural skills taught in the course are retained by course participants for at least 6 years, which may be the most significant impact of all.

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# SUMMARY

The ATLS course provides an easily remembered approach to evaluating and treating injured patients for any doctor, irrespective of practice specialty, even under the stress, anxiety, and intensity that accompanies the resuscitation process. In addition, the program provides a common language for all providers who care for injured patients. The ATLS course offers a foundation for evaluation, treatment, education, and quality assurance—in short, a system of trauma care that is measurable, reproducible, and comprehensive.

The ATLS Program has had a positive impact on the care of injured patients worldwide. This effect is a result of the improved skills and knowledge of the doctors and other healthcare providers who have been course participants. The ATLS course establishes an organized, systematic approach for evaluation and treatment of patients, promotes minimum standards of care, and recognizes injury as a world healthcare issue. Morbidity and mortality have been reduced, but the need to eradicate injury remains. The ATLS Program has changed and will continue to change as advances occur in medicine and the needs and expectations of our societies change.

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# **ATLS®** Advanced Trauma Life Support®

**Student Course Manual** 



# INITIAL ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Repeat the primary survey frequently to identify any deterioration in the patient's status that indicates the need for additional intervention.

# CHAPTER I OUTLINE

### OBJECTIVES

### INTRODUCTION

### PREPARATION

- Prehospital Phase
- Hospital Phase

#### TRIAGE

- Multiple Casualties
- Mass Casualties

### PRIMARY SURVEY WITH SIMULTANEOUS RESUSCITATION

- Airway Maintenance with Restriction of Cervical Spine Motion
- Breathing and Ventilation
- Circulation with Hemorrhage Control
- Disability (Neurologic Evaluation)
- Exposure and Environmental Control

### ADJUNCTS TO THE PRIMARY SURVEY WITH RESUSCITATION

- Electrocardiographic Monitoring
- Pulse Oximetry
- Ventilatory Rate, Capnography, and Arterial Blood Gases
- Urinary and Gastric Catheters
- X-ray Examinations and Diagnostic Studies

### CONSIDER NEED FOR PATIENT TRANSFER

### SPECIAL POPULATIONS

### SECONDARY SURVEY

### ADJUNCTS TO THE SECONDARY SURVEY

### REEVALUATION

### DEFINITIVE CARE

### RECORDS AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Records
- Consent for Treatment
- Forensic Evidence

### TEAMWORK

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**OBJECTIVES** 

After reading this chapter and comprehending the knowledge components of the ATLS provider course, you will be able to:

- I. Explain the importance of prehospital and hospital preparation to facilitate rapid resuscitation of trauma patients.
- 2. Identify the correct sequence of priorities for the assessment of injured patients.
- 3. Explain the principles of the primary survey, as they apply to the assessment of an injured patient.
- 4. Explain how a patient's medical history and the mechanism of injury contribute to the identification of injuries.
- 5. Explain the need for immediate resuscitation during the primary survey.
- 6. Describe the initial assessment of a multiply injured patient, using the correct sequence of priorities.
- 7. Identify the pitfalls associated with the initial assessment and management of injured patients and describe ways to avoid them.

- 8. Explain the management techniques employed during the primary assessment and stabilization of a multiply injured patient.
- 9. Identify the adjuncts to the assessment and management of injured patients as part of the primary survey, and recognize the contraindications to their use.
- 10. Recognize patients who require transfer to another facility for definitive management.
- II. Identify the components of a secondary survey, including adjuncts that may be appropriate during its performance.
- 12. Discuss the importance of reevaluating a patient who is not responding appropriately to resuscitation and management.
- 13. Explain the importance of teamwork in the initial assessment of trauma patients.

- History
  - Physical Examination