Trauma Training In Lebanon:
A collaborative initiative with Roads for Life The Talal Kassem Fund for Post Accident Care, and the American University of Beirut Medical Center
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Roads for Life

Roads For Life – the Talal Kassem Fund for Post-Accident Care is a nonprofit organization established in 2011 in memory of Talal Kassem, a young 17-year-old boy who was killed by a raging driver while crossing the road on his way to school. Since establishing the Fund, Mrs. Zeina Kassem, president of Roads For Life has worked tirelessly for two goals:

1. To advocate for the implementation of a modern traffic law in Lebanon
2. To spread the most advanced and up to date Post Trauma Care skills and techniques by training Lebanon’s Medical Doctors, Nursing, and Paramedical Emergency Personnel.

After learning of the Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS®) Course for physicians had been given at the AUBMC three times in 2011, Roads For Life entered into a partnership with AUBMC and began to sponsor the course for ER physicians across all Hospital ER Rooms of Lebanon. Two years later, in which more than 200 physicians and instructors were trained, Roads For Life expanded their efforts and were able to promulgate the Pre-hospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS®) Course for paramedics in collaboration with the Lebanese Red Cross. To date they have trained more than 350 paramedics across the country. After these accomplishments, Roads for Life set its sights with the optimal goal of professionalizing the post trauma care at all levels of the trauma cycle by bringing the Advanced Trauma Care for Nurses (ATCN®) course to Lebanon.

ATLS® and ATCN®: A Brief History

The Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS®) course was established after a tragic plane crash in a cornfield in Nebraska in 1976. The wife of the pilot, Dr. James Styner, died at the scene, and two of their four children were seriously injured. They were taken to a local hospital for treatment. Dr. Styner was shocked by the inadequate standard of care received and decided to do what he could to develop a system to improve the management of trauma in rural areas. The first ATLS® course was held in 1978 in Nebraska. The following year it was adopted by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Committee on
Trauma (COT) and rapidly spread through North, Central, and South America. The ATLS® continues to flourish, and has been introduced worldwide. It is now taught in more than 60 countries and translated into many languages with more than a million physicians trained over the last three decades.

The Advanced Trauma Care for Nurses (ATCN®) course was developed in response to a need for advanced trauma education for nurses. The ATCN® course has been operational since 1984. In 2000, the ATCN® program was incorporated under the auspices of the Society of Trauma Nurses (STN).

The ATLS® and ATCN® courses were designed for emergency situations in rural settings where only one doctor and one nurse are available at any time. Today it is well accepted as a standard of care for the first (golden) hour in trauma centers around the world. One of the main tenets of the course is to train health care providers who are not regularly managing trauma to treat the greatest threat to life first.

It is an intensive two-and-a-half days course with an instructor-to-candidate ratio of 1:4. The course uses adult interactive teaching methods, which include simulated clinical scenarios, interactive lectures, group discussions, and practical skill stations. Teaching material is available in an ATLS® provider book manual and an additional supplemental ATCN® manual for nurses. Assessment of the candidates includes Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and clinical skills examinations. The final exit exam is the evaluation of the management of a clinical scenario using a multiple trauma patient to whom the candidate should successfully apply the principles of ATCN®. The ATCN® Student Course has been awarded 18.5 contact hours by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Commission on Accreditation.

Literature Review of Trauma Training

The current literature on the efficacy of the ATLS® and ATCN® curriculum has shown that the courses improve the knowledge, clinical skills, and decision making skills of participants. These effects were present in a wide range of candidates including undergraduate students and different specialists treating multiple trauma patients. Knowledge and clinical skills gained from the trauma courses decline after 6 months if not reinforced. A very important finding is that organizational and priority skills, which are important for critical decision making, are retained up to 8 years after training. In contrast, clear evidence that ATCN® training reduces death and disability of trauma patients is still lacking. Cognitive and management skills can deteriorate significantly even after as little as 6 months after course completion. Cognitive skills are lost more quickly than practical especially among, healthcare practitioners who are not in surgical practice. Therefore, cognitive skills taught should focus on features of clinical competencies directly related to interventions and decision making in trauma care. Furthermore, the interactive form for learning ATLS® has a significant effect on the clinical skills gained. Likely this is so because the format has a high degree of student involvement, multiple opportunities for asking questions, and for group discussions and feedback. This challenging and stimulating environment is also reported to be enjoyable and fruitful.

Trauma Education in Lebanon

It was in December 2013, that years of planning and communicating with the Society of Trauma Nurses (STN) came to fruition. A select group of registered nurses from the AUBMC, and the Rafic Hariri School of Nursing were fully sponsored by Roads for Life with the support of Bank Audi to go to the regional...
training center in King Abdul Aziz Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to undergo instructor training. This resulted in an inaugural course being held in Lebanon in May 2014.

In June 2014, Roads For Life convinced the Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon to issue Circular number 51 that “urged governmental and private hospital to delegate the adequate people to take part in the ATLS® and ATCN® training sessions”.

A few months later, in October 2014, Mrs. Zeina Kassem was recognized by the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma for being able to promulgate and sustain all three core trauma courses and for initializing a national trauma system in Lebanon.

Roads for Life and AUBMC are working hand in hand to spread trauma culture on both a national and regional level. Indeed, it was in the same year that the Society of Trauma Nurses (STN) sent a request to the Lebanese Chapter of ATCN® to assist Cyprus in the start-up of the ATCN® Course. In December 2014, the ATCN® International Chair, Mr. Richard Henn and a select team of registered nurses from Lebanon trained by Roads for Life conducted their inaugural visit to Nicosia to promulgate the ATCN® course in Cyprus. Today there are requests from Tunisia, and Greece for assistance from the Lebanese Chapter of ATLS® and ATCN® to initiate the courses in their countries.

In summary, a swift and efficient intervention by the emergency teams on the scene of the accident can prevent 40% of unnecessary deaths. For nurses, the three day ATCN® course includes an educational model that promotes critical thinking processes, collaborative, synchronized team approach to trauma care along with the students of the simultaneous ATLS® Course. Doctors and nurses caring for trauma patients in Lebanon have the opportunity to share a common language and approach to trauma care to be able to save more lives in the Golden Period of Trauma.

The door is open for any healthcare professionals in Lebanon who are interested in expanding their skill sets and getting certified. To date, Roads For Life and Bank Audi have sponsored 150 emergency room and intensive care nurses to take the course.

References: