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Research to improve trauma patient care neglected

Trauma care research and the war on uncertainty, BMJ Volume 331, pp1094-6

The ability to improve outcomes and treatment for trauma patients is seriously hampered by a 'dearth of clinical trials', according to an editorial in this week's British Medical Journal.

More than 10,000 people die every day, world-wide, and 300,000 people are severely injured daily – mostly from road traffic crashes and violence.

Trauma doctors, writing in this week's BMJ, argue that there is an urgent need to improve the evidence base for trauma care, something that remains a major challenge to health professionals.

Compared with diseases, there are far fewer clinical trials into trauma, they argue, and those in existence are small which means their findings do not contribute much to certain improvements.

The first large scale clinical trials in trauma care carried out by the UK's Medical Research Council found that a treatment that had been used for more than 30 years did more harm than good.

The main problem, the doctors argue, is that: 'Funding for trauma research is less than for almost any other cause of human suffering.'

Another obstacle is that clinical trials take place in an emergency situation with unconscious patients who are unable to give informed consent. Few countries have legislation in place to handle these situations.

Until there are more international trials into trauma care, these patients are being unfairly denied the benefits of medical research. ###