

**EVALUATION OF TRAUMA SYSTEM IN ALBANIA USING AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS BASIC CRITERIA: A CALL FOR SUBSTANCIAL REFORMS**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Trauma is major health care problem in Albania, which lacks an organized trauma system.

**Methods:** As part of the establishment of a teletrauma program in Albania, we evaluated the trauma system of Albania using the basic trauma criteria of the American College of Surgeons/Committee on Trauma (ACS/COT) as assessment tools.

**Results:** Albania has a dedicated trauma hospital with regional hospitals that provide trauma care, but trauma services, including injury prevention, pre-hospital, and hospital rehabilitation are in need of major reform in order to meet the basic requirements for a trauma system.

**Conclusion:** Albania is in need of transforming the current trauma system into a structured, organized, and coordinated system at all levels. In particular, there is a need for major reforms in the educational and professional preparation of trauma care providers.

**Background**

One of the most pressing health care issues in the Republic of Albania, a country in southeastern Europe with a population of over 3.24 million, and a size of 11,100 square miles (28,748 km<sup>2</sup>), is the lack of a comprehensive trauma system and

infrastructure. The mortality and morbidity rates from motor vehicle crashes manifest an increasing trend (1,2). In addition to road accidents, trauma related to homicide and intentional injury is a major concern, but exact data are difficult to obtain, as there is no one single agency in the country that collects and distributes these data. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in its 2011 "Global Study on Homicide" reported high rates of homicide and intentional injury in Albania as well (3). Furthermore, the trauma system in Albania faces, on average, 2.5 to 3 deaths per day, according to the Causes of Death Report prepared by the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). For road traffic accidents alone, the average stands at 1 death and 4 injuries per day (4).

Albania, a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is undergoing a transition from an oppressive Communist regime, to a democracy with massive reconstruction of roads and overall infrastructure. But that massive reconstruction is associated with an increasing number of trauma-related fatalities and injuries. In addition to the absence of a dedicated and organized trauma system, Albania also lacks a professional training system for trauma surgeons and other trauma care providers. Moreover, untrained and uncertified personnel do prehospital care.