

Report on the discussions about Primary Trauma Care in Lesotho

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Background

Primary Trauma Care (PTC) is a method of trauma management, developed to suit the needs of countries who request a structured, affordable and flexible system to care for their trauma victims. PTC is based on the Airway-Breathing-Circulation principle and helps to identify and treat life-threatening injuries. Lesotho has a fair portion of trauma, resulting from road traffic accidents, assaults and industrial accidents. Although exact statistics about causes of mortality are hard to get, it is very likely that trauma and AIDS compete for the first position in the 15-44 years age group. Seeing the need for a formalized trauma management, the PTC-foundation was approached by Dr. Oloruntoba to discuss the possibilities of introducing the PTC-training in Lesotho.

I worked in Lesotho for four years, about a decade ago, and married there as well. As I was planning to spend the summer holidays with my family in Lesotho, I agreed we could have some discussion on the subject.

Visiting Lesotho

After some preliminary meetings, Dr. Letsie, on behalf of the Lesotho Medical Council (LMA), invited me to present the PTC concept during a meeting of the LMA on the 15th August 2004. The presentation was supported with a custom-made PowerPoint slide show, summarizing the most important aspects of PTC. For reference sake a copy of this presentation is included as an insert. Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Letsie I was (re)introduced to the Director General of Health Services (DGHS), Dr. Ramatlapeng, to discuss PTC in her office on the 24th of August. We had a fruitful discussion about trauma in general, and PTC and ambulance services in particular. Dr. Ramatlapeng agreed that trauma is indeed a major health problem in Lesotho and stressed the importance of including a continuous education program regarding PTC in the annual budget of the Ministry of Health (MoH). PTC supports this idea fully: the PTC foundation will pay whatever is needed to get PTC started. A continuous program, however, is better managed and budgeted for by the MoH.

The near future plans

When discussing a time frame, we agreed that, if the appropriate bodies in Lesotho (most likely the MoH and the LMA) commit themselves to PTC, it is best to conduct the first PTC-course as soon as possible. It was indicated that January 2005 might be a good time, as most people are too busy in December. Three instructors from Europe will direct and instruct the first PTC-course, with 20-25 participants. For the instructors' course, to be held immediately following the first two-days PTC-course, either a local educationalist or Diane Wilkinson, an educationalist from the UK could be asked. If possible it would be advisable to conduct a second PTC course, with new participants, immediately after the instructors' course. The newly trained instructors can then practice their skills straight away, under the supervision of the overseas instructors.