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Message from the Vice President**The Team Approach**

This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the European Trauma Course (ETC). This was one of the first courses to focus on developing nontechnical skills and the first to do so in the context of trauma management. ESTES was one of the four founding societies, together with the European Resuscitation Council (ERC), European Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care (ESAIC) and European Society for Emergency Medicine (EuSEM), that have nurtured and overseen the development of the course since its inception.

The course was formally launched in Ghent in 2008 at a meeting of the ERC, having been initially piloted in Malta in 2006 and subsequently refined during four further pilot courses. Since then, more than 16,000 candidates have been trained in 23 countries throughout Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and South America.

The course focuses on the initial clinical management of the major trauma patient by the trauma team and follows the time-critical period from the receipt of a pre-alert to the point at which the patient is ready to leave the trauma bay with a formulated management plan.

Crew resource management is integral to this process. As the patient arrives, the multiprofessional team takes over from the emergency medical service and many different tasks are begun simultaneously by different team members with complementary skill sets.

In clinical practice, the trauma team is usually an “action team” that is formed shortly before (and sometimes after) the patient arrives. In many cases, the complete team will not have worked together before. The course simulates this by working with small groups and mixing their composition throughout the course. To make that work requires a predefined team structure with allocated roles and responsibilities, goal-directed communication and clear leadership. By the end of day 2 on the ETC, all of the candidates know their roles and what to expect of their colleagues, even if they have not met the other members of their action team before.

Good trauma care saves lives. Complex team work under pressure is prone to errors and in the context of the trauma bay, those errors can cost lives. It has been estimated that 70% of all medical errors are the result of a breakdown in human factors. Lack of trust or lack of respect among team members leads to a loss of cohesion within a team which, in turn, leads to a breakdown of human factors.

The focus on human factors in the course, based on the four pillars of teamwork—task management, situational awareness and decision making—fosters the development of a supportive and effective team. The importance of good communication is emphasised as the glue that binds these pillars together.

The ETC requires basic knowledge of trauma care and was initially targeted at doctors involved in trauma care, together with emergency department nurses, paramedics, and operating department practitioners (ODPs) who are able to practice independently within

defined criteria in their own organisations or institutions. While the knowledge and skills gained in the Advanced Trauma Life Support course provide a useful foundation for the ETC, it is not a prerequisite. There is little overlap between the two courses which should be viewed as complementary, not competitive.

In many instances, doctors and other independent practitioners are not the only members of the trauma team. It would be wrong to exclude team members from team training. With that in mind, and following an extensive pilot study in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, Trauma Support Practitioner (TSP) training now forms an optional part of the course. These TSPs are usually senior nurses within an emergency department who work in either a nursing role or as a scribe (to document the management of the patient in real time) on the course as in real life. The inclusion of TSPs has significantly increased their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a trauma team member and improved their confidence in managing polytrauma in the emergency department as part of the trauma team.

The course is very intense, hands on and scenario based. The 31 scenarios cover the full range of trauma cases and become progressively complex as the course develops. Furthermore, 90% of the course takes the form of practical workshops as learning by doing has a retention rate of over 75%. Use of didactic lectures, where less than 20% of what is intended to be taught is actually retained by the trainee, is kept to a minimum (only one).

The candidates work in groups of 4 and alternate the roles of team members and team leader. If the course has TSPs there will also be 2 of these in each group. The use of small groups means that a participant cannot hide. However, the importance of providing a psychologically safe and supportive learning environment, exemplified by the debriefing session at the end of every scenario, is paramount to the success of the course. This is the most crucial part of the learning experience where individual and team aspects are appraised and the learning objectives of the workshop are reinforced.

The candidates undergo a formative assessment throughout the entire course that looks at knowledge and their developing competence not only as a team leader, but, perhaps more importantly, as a team member. On the final day they undergo a summative assessment as a team leader in which they are assessed against 20 criteria in a standardised scenario. Successful candidates receive a provider certificate that is valid for 5 years. Thereafter, individuals can either take the course again or complete an online recertification course. This online course has been extremely popular since its introduction in December 2021.

The organisation of trauma care varies considerably throughout Europe and the course was designed to be adaptable to local circumstances and resources. This has also enabled the course to grow beyond the boundaries of Europe. The ETC is now an internationally accredited, interdisciplinary, multiprofessional team-training course. This achievement is something of which all four founding societies can be proud.

Jonathan Tilsed
ESTES Vice President

Announcements

Upcoming related congresses & courses

Polytrauma Course

May 5–6, 2023

Ljubljana, Slovenia

ECTES 2023

May 7–9, 2023

Ljubljana, Slovenia

DSAPNTC

June 21–23, 2023

Santarém, Portugal

7th E.S.T.R.O.T. Congress

July 3–5, 2023

Frankfurt, Germany

DSTC – Definitive Surgical Trauma Care

September 18–19, 2023

Graz, Austria

DSTC – Definitive Surgical Trauma Care

September 25–26, 2023

Graz, Austria

More congresses and courses to be found in the **ESTES events calendar** at
www.estesonline.org