

Major COVID-19 challenges for Trauma

The global COVID-19 pandemic threatens to overwhelm Gaza's health care system and seriously reduce its ability to deal with patients needing trauma care and surgery. It has affected trauma care at all levels: pre-hospital, hospital and tertiary care.

(All figures are from June till end of September 2020).

This is the information gathered from the Gaza Trauma Working Group partners:

Pre-hospital:

- The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) ambulances transferred more than 15,945 cases from the field to emergency departments, an increase from an average of 82 cases per day to an average of 180 cases per day.
- From August 24th to October 3rd, around 40,000 people were assessed by the Respiratory Triage Centres (RTC) personnel, 4,817 of them respiratory cases.

EDs and acute surgeries:

- There were 303,882 consultations in the emergency departments of the six major Ministry of Health (MoH) hospitals, of which 87,8% were trauma related.
- During the first quarter of 2020, 3,808 emergency surgical operations were conducted in the MoH Gaza hospitals, while in the second quarter 3,724 surgeries were conducted. In the third quarter, 4,208 surgeries were conducted, an increase of 5% for an already overburdened health system.

Specialised and advanced care:

Elective operations were put on hold, but not limb reconstruction related operations.

Limb Reconstruction Centre (LRC), Nasser Medical Complex:

77 new cases were admitted and 78 limb reconstruction surgeries were carried out.

Rehabilitation care in the LRC

694 physiotherapy sessions and 1,648 psychotherapy sessions were conducted.

Overview:

- Delays in procurement due to border closures and global demand for supplies.
- Additional movement restrictions related to curfew.

Feedback from partners:

MSF-B

- Working at 30% of the total capacity.
- At the beginning of the COVID-19 community transmission, all Outpatient Department services were put on hold. There was a slow return to activities. The number of beneficiaries decreased to half (maximum of 20-25 instead of 40-45).
- All elective surgeries were put on hold. Since MoH facilities work in an emergency mode, there was a decrease in the number of bone samples processed at Rantisi hospital. Only two samples were taken since the beginning of the community outbreak compared to previously two samples per week.

- 10% of the cases that MSF-B had to treat were under home quarantine, which meant that they had to change their regular work schedule and make home visit to these patients.
- Some patients refused receiving services, due to fear of infection transmission.

UHC: Al Awda Hospital

- Trauma cases increased three times during COVID-19, including paediatric cases.
- The number of orthopaedic surgeries increased by 100%. All orthopaedic cases from the Indonesia Hospital were referred to al-Awda Hospital.
- All elective surgeries were put on hold during the first 3 weeks of the community transmission, but rescheduling surgeries resumed, and the plan is to treat 20-25 cases instead of 15.
- This resulted in an increase of the workload. 100 staff members were doing shifts that lasted 72 hours.
- Outpatient department activities were put on hold for 3 weeks.
- High consumption of IPC items, especially gloves, masks and hand disinfectant.
- Training sessions increased and focused mainly on IPC measures.
- There were difficulties to reach the hospital, so the ambulances were used to transport staff and post operation cases.

MAP-UK

- Since the start of community transmission of COVID-19 in late August, projects supporting trauma care decreased and in some cases were suspended.

Activities that were suspended:

- Blood bank campaigns.
- Primary Trauma Care (PTC) training for surgical residents.
- Medical missions and equipment donation.
- 125 consultations and 28 surgeries on average used to be carried out per international mission under the Limb Reconstruction, Neurosurgery and General Surgery projects.

Shifting of work:

- Shifting the Neurosurgery department from the European Gaza Hospital to Nasser hospital.
- Procurement activities focused more on COVID-19, especially lab testing materials. This affected other trauma, non-COVID-19 patients.

MSF-F:

- All referral cases to Amman stopped due to border closures.
- All MSF F clinics were closed at the beginning of the outbreak, and this meant that the number of beneficiaries has decreased to less than half. They have now resumed activities.
- Burns operations at the Shifa hospital hasn't closed at all during this period.
- IPD and osteomyelitis management were put on hold and only restarted operating a week ago.
- All mobile physio and psycho services provision are ongoing and we witness and increase in the consumption of IPC consumables.
- All training has moved online.
- The clinic in the north of Gaza Strip was closed.