Impact of Two Terrorist Bombings on Two Hospitals in Istanbul, Turkey in November, 2003

Objective: To estimate the impact of the terrorist bombings of the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation headquarters and the British consulate in Istanbul, Turkey on 20 November 2003 on two nearby hospitals in terms of epidemiological outcomes, resource utilization, and time course of emergency needs.

Methods: Data were abstracted from hospital records of injured survivors, who used the emergency departments (ED) at the Taksim Education and Research State Hospital (TERSH) and the American Hospital (AH) in Istanbul on 20 November 2003, to determine the totals and rates of mortality (early, late, and critical), injury, critical injury (injury severity score (ISS) >15), ED use, hospitalizations, operative care, in-hospital over-triage, and the time intervals of ED arrival.

Results: The TERSH received 184 victims in the first hour after the initial blast, of which 88 (48%) were brought by emergency medical services (EMS), 171 (93%) had lacerations, 7 (4%) had penetrating eye injuries, 28 (15%) were hospitalized, 18 (10%) received operative care, and seven (4%) were critically injured. Three deaths occurred in critically injured survivors, including one early death in the operating room and two late deaths on days five and six. The AH received 16 victims, of which 14 (88%) had lacerations, three (19%) were hospitalized, two (13%) received operative care, and one (6%) was critically injured. An additional four victims were transferred to the AH from other hospitals, of which three were hospitalized, and none were critically injured. No early or late deaths occurred.

Conclusion: Mortality, injury, and hospitalization rates at both hospitals were consistent with previous reports of open-air, mass-casualty, terrorist bombings. The TERSH experienced an unprecedented demand for ED surge capacity in an open-air bombing.

Keywords: bombing; emergency management; emergency medical services (EMS); emergency medicine; injury; maldistribution; terrorism; trauma; Turkey