Paris Terror Attacks
13th November 2015
Nearly One Year On...
The SAMU Perspective

INSIDE:
SAMU de Paris’ Professor Pierre Carli gives an exclusive overview on the decisions they made that saved countless lives and which will have critical implications on how terrorist attacks could be handled in the future.
Alcohol Intoxication Management Services (AIMS): What are they and what can they do?

UK NHS Ambulance services are greatly affected by the need to treat patients who are intoxicated by alcohol. Ambulance personnel have estimated that 37% of their time is spent managing alcohol-related incidents, with peaks in demand on Friday and Saturday nights. [1] Abuse (physical and verbal) directed towards ambulance service staff was recorded in 7.6% alcohol related call outs. [2] This level of abuse is likely to have a significant impact on staff morale.

Urgent and emergency care services in the United Kingdom (UK), in common with many other countries, face a substantial burden from patients who are intoxicated by alcohol. Approximately 70% of attendances at Emergency Departments (ED) are alcohol-related at peak times. [3][4] ED attendances for alcohol poisoning in England approximately doubled between 2008 and 2014. [5] These attendances peak in the early hours of the morning when ED resources are often at their most stretched. [6] Additional attendances cause overcrowding and affect other patients, staff and the community. Patients waiting in the same area can become anxious and fearful. [7] Patients experience prolonged pain and suffering, increased waiting times and decreased satisfaction. [8] Alcohol related admissions can cause the clinical environment to suffer, decreases physician productivity, increases stress and frustration among staff which causes a detriment to care [9] and promotes violence. [10][11] ED bottlenecks, coupled with a general increase in pressure on available resources [12] contribute to reduced ambulance capacity and undermine the provision of care in the ED. [13]

Alcohol affects judgement and increases the likelihood of accidents, injury, violence and antisocial behaviour. The UK Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) recommends that the intoxicated cannot be admitted into custody until a clinical decision maker, typically in the ED, has determined that it is safe to do so. [14] Evidence suggests that police officers, working in pairs, are often required to escort patients to ED and can also be delayed when EDs are busy. This reduces police capacity in the night time environment.

Since at least the 1980s city centres have become increasingly characterised by...
What are Alcohol Intoxication Management Services (AIMS)?

AIMS, sometimes referred to as Alcohol Treatment Centres, Alcohol Recovery Centres, Alcohol Welfare Centres and, in the media, “Drunk Tanks”, are designed to receive, treat and monitor intoxicated patients who would normally attend EDs and to lessen the burden that alcohol misuse, an avoidable healthcare cost, places on unscheduled care. They are usually located close to areas characterised by excessive intoxication and are open at times when the number of people drinking to excess peaks (e.g. Friday and Saturday evenings) as well as significant events (e.g. student nights), sporting occasions and national holidays.

AIMS can take a number of different forms and vary in structure, staffing, organisation and ability to deliver clinical care. The different types of AIMS are outlined in the box below.

What are the potential benefits of AIMS?

There are four potential benefits from AIMS:

1. AIMS potentially offer a cost-effective means of improving the provision of care in ED by managing intoxicated patients elsewhere. Having fewer intoxicated patients in the ED may reduce the number of violent incidents thereby improving the ED environment and other patient’s sense of safety and general wellbeing.

2. AIMS may improve ambulance handover at ED and by implication ambulance capacity in the community. Increasing ambulance capacity is likely to improve opportunities to respond promptly to calls from the community, increase opportunities for prompt medical treatment, improve rapid transport of patients to specialists, and potentially improve survival rates and the better use of existing resources.

3. Police officers can become caught up in ED when they seek a clinical opinion on an offender’s health or respond to an incident in ED (e.g. assault on a member of staff). There is evidence that police presence can prevent significant injury in the cause of violent assault through early intervention [4]. The availability of the AIMS would mean officers are able to return to duties more rapidly. Increasing police capacity is likely to decrease the risk of assault with injury in patrons of the night time.

4. AIMS offer a good opportunity to address problem drinking, particularly as the point where patients are safe to be discharged as they are likely to be in a “teachable moment”, a period when brief interventions are most effective [5].

Table 1. Examples of AIMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIMS</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff Alcohol Treatment Centre ATC</td>
<td>• Opened: 2012&lt;br&gt; • Based in a building in the city centre&lt;br&gt; • Commissioned by Cardiff and Vale Area Planning Board (APB)&lt;br&gt; • Open: Friday and Saturday, 8pm until 8am, plus additional high-activity nights&lt;br&gt;Staff:&lt;br&gt; • Police officer&lt;br&gt; • Nurse practitioner&lt;br&gt; • Paramedic&lt;br&gt; • Urgent Care Service Care Assistant&lt;br&gt; • Substance misuse / alcohol worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham City Centre Treatment Unit (CCTU)</td>
<td>• Opened: 2011&lt;br&gt; • Run by West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust&lt;br&gt; • Open: 9pm to 4am Fridays and Saturdays and on days of “high demand”&lt;br&gt;Staff:&lt;br&gt; • Paramedic&lt;br&gt; • Emergency Medical Technician&lt;br&gt; • Supported by two RRVs and two double-crewed ambulances,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester Safe Haven (Nexus Art Café)</td>
<td>• Opened: 2015&lt;br&gt; • Based in a community café / church building&lt;br&gt; • Run by Greater Manchester Police volunteers and Nexus café staff&lt;br&gt; • Open: Saturdays 11 pm to 6am. some Fridays&lt;br&gt;Staff:&lt;br&gt; • Café volunteer staff&lt;br&gt; • North West Ambulance Service paramedic (if requested)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>