

A Long Walk to Freedom - The Epidemiology of Penetrating Trauma in South Africa

-By Malini Bhana, Pascaline Fru, Frank Plani-

Introduction :

Despite the city of Johannesburg having one of the highest rates of crime in the world, no national databank for trauma exists. This study profiles the victims of penetrating trauma and identifies geographical areas they occur in while describing the outcomes and patterns of injury.

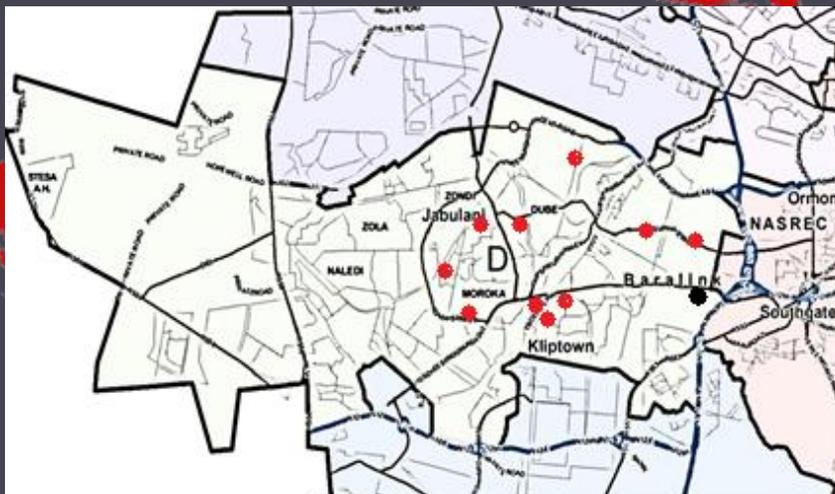
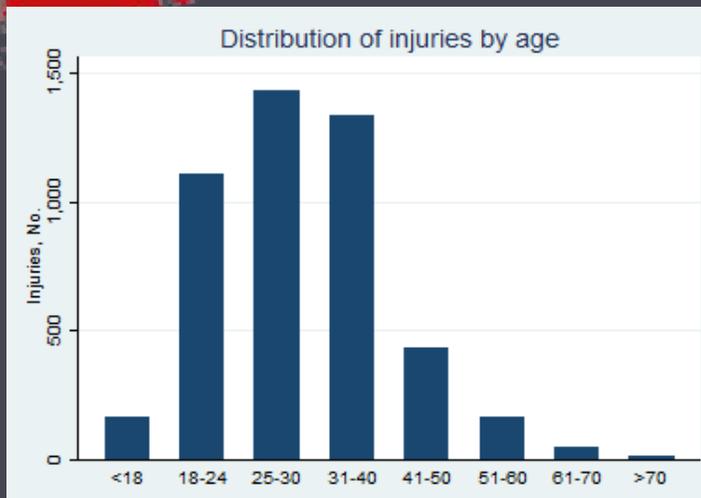
Conclusions:

Penetrating trauma is inherently linked to interpersonal violence in South Africa, primarily affecting its young economic, working class citizens. The data provided some insight into the burden, structure and challenges of our trauma system. These should be regarded as opportunities to implement change and improve our surveillance and prevention, beginning with a national trauma databank.

Methods:

A retrospective study including penetrating trauma patients triaged as Priority 1, presenting at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital's (CHBAH) trauma department over a six-year period 2011-2016.

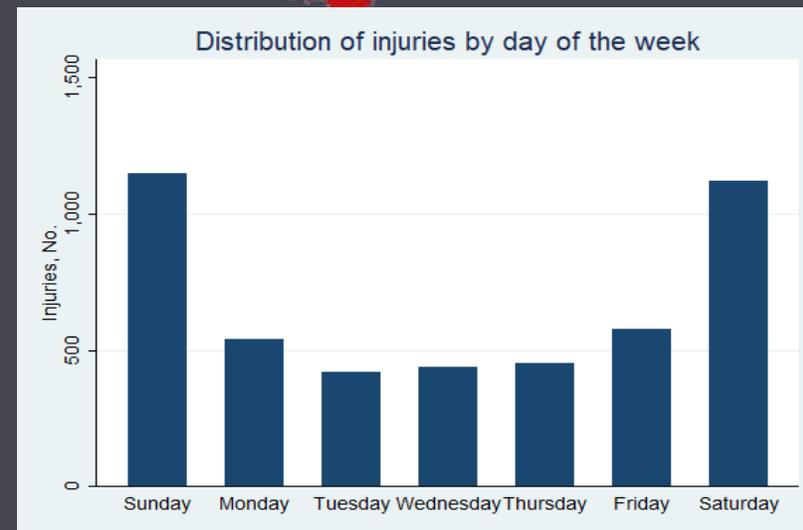
Results:



Key: Red dot = hot spot
Black dot = CHBAH

A total of 4697 patients were included.

- The majority of victims were Black African males (92.1%, n=4326/4697)
- Commonest age group was 29-40 years
- Stabbings commonest mechanism of injury (71.8%, 3372/4697), followed by gunshots.



- The commonest body area affected was the thorax
- Weekends accounted for over 48% of all presentations - the last weekend of the month being the time with the most prevalence.
- Region D was the area in Johannesburg with the highest trauma incidence (51.9%, 1199/2310) with the oldest townships in Soweto found to be "hot spots".