



PHTLS and NAEMT – Making a Difference: Law Enforcement and First Response Tactical Casualty Care (LEFR-TCC)

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In November of 2009, the PHTLS committee and NAEMT partnered with the Committee on Tactical Combat Casualty Care to train civilian faculty in the Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) Course and to offer it to civilian responders who are responsible for managing trauma patients from civilian tactical situations and to those prehospital responders who might find themselves involved in such incidents. The first PHTLS/NAEMT sponsored TCCC was given in Reno the following February. The overall response to this program has been outstanding and it has been enthusiastically received, not only here in the United States, but in numerous other countries where the course has been taught to both civilian responders and military personnel.

Over the ensuing several years, it became apparent that while the TCCC was extremely popular, it was clearly focused at those providers who were at an advanced life support level as it included a great deal of information about pharmacology, medication use, and invasive procedures and interventions. Participants in the courses who were not trained to that level, particularly law enforcement officers, provided feedback that while portions of the information provided were clearly of value to them, much of the material was too advanced and would not be useful to them.

Given this feedback, the PHTLS committee in partnership with the Denver Health Paramedic Division EMS Education Department and the Denver Police Metro SWAT Unit undertook the development of a casualty care course that would meet the needs of law enforcement officers and other first responders. Added importance was given to this concept as a result of the increasing numbers of active shooter events and the recognition that early medical response to these incidents would enhance survival of victims. The resulting program, titled Law Enforcement and First Response Tactical Casualty Care (LEFR-TCC), was first piloted in Denver in the spring of 2013 and made available for NAEMT-approved TCCC instructors shortly thereafter.

This one-day program combines didactic lecture with skills sessions and clinical scenarios to teach and reinforce the basic medical interventions of hemorrhage control using tourniquets or direct pressure in combination with wound packing (with plain gauze or topical hemostatic agents), management of open pneumothorax (sucking chest wounds), recognition of tension pneumothorax, and simple airway maneuvers to open an obstructed airway. As of September 3, 2014, more than 220 NAEMT/PHTLS-sponsored LEFR-TCC courses have been delivered with approximately 2,639 participants trained. The response to this educational offering has been outstanding and continues to grow.

However, measuring the impact of this sort of program has historically been extremely difficult. Recently, specific feedback was given to the LEFR-TCC educators in Denver from two participants in their courses documenting the benefit and importance of this course offering.

In the first case, a participant who works for the Organization for the Prohibition Chemical Weapons was deployed to Syria one week after attending the LEFR-TCC course. Shortly after his arrival in country, a mortar attack resulted in the amputation of one leg of a near-by teen-aged female. He immediately responded and applied a tourniquet to her leg, saving her life.

In the second case, a local police officer responded to a 9-1-1 call. Upon arrival to the scene he was immediately ambushed and sustained a gunshot to one of his upper extremities resulting in a major hemorrhage. While immediately moving to a safe location, he applied a tourniquet to his arm.

Both participants stated that while the didactic lectures and manual skill stations were important parts of the education, the practical patient scenarios provided the necessary repetition and confidence to actually apply the lessons learned in the classroom.

This feedback and these comments reinforce the decision to make the LEFR-TCC course more than just a short “briefing” on how to control bleeding. The hands-on, clinical scenario component of the course is a crucial part of developing the necessary manual skills, decision-making capacity, and self-confidence to act in role that traditionally has not been part of the law enforcement paradigm. The PHTLS Committee and NAEMT are proud to sponsor this program as part of the educational offerings that help to positively affect the outcome of prehospital trauma patients the world over.