



What our surgeons learned in Afghanistan could help with the ‘war’ at home

“With what we see in our emergency departments across Australasia, it would be easy to believe we are at war with ourselves.”

Dr Daryl Wall, Trauma Committee Chair, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

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A Melbourne conference today was told surgeons, including Australians, serving with American forces in Afghanistan and operating on coalition defence force personnel achieved a patient survival-rate of a remarkable 98% - and there are lessons to be learned from this at home.

The 2013 ‘Trauma Week’ symposium - *Lessons learned from the Middle East: ‘Out of the Heat and Dust – Sharpening the Cutting Edge of Trauma Care* - saw interstate and international ‘leaders in the field’ discussing the latest in trauma care with more than 50 of Australia’s leading surgeons and specialists.

The symposium is an annual event for the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and this year featured medical professionals including Australian specialists with first-hand experience of the Middle East Area of Operations.

The College’s Trauma Committee Chair Daryl Wall said, “In Afghanistan, if a soldier is brought to the medical centre with a pulse, statistics show there is a 98% chance they will leave alive.”

Dr Wall said the way in which this level of success was achieved could be of assistance to trauma surgeons in Australasia who regularly face scenarios very much like the ones found on the frontline.

“While it is difficult to make a direct comparison, injuries for injuries, situation for situation, the symposium is an opportunity to explore what can be learned and then applied in trauma centres in Australasia,” he said.

“Australasia’s emergency departments – particularly on Friday night and over the weekends – can bear a striking resemblance to field hospitals in war zones. With what we see in our emergency departments, it would be easy to believe we are at war with ourselves,” Dr Wall said.

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