

Spinal injuries – Military know-how improves civilian victim's chances

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While the war in Afghanistan may not be popular with the public, one thing has come out of the conflict that has benefited hundreds of civilians back in the UK. Thanks to the unique nature of battlefield injuries, military medical experts are now developing new methods of treatment that can translate into civilian medical care, particularly in serious trauma injuries such as [spinal injuries](#).

Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital is the epicentre of military/civilian crossover treatments. It is here that seriously injured servicemen and women are brought for intensive treatment and long term care. After several years of dealing with conflict injuries, the hospital is now regarded as a centre of excellence when it comes to treating severe physical trauma. And now civilian victims are starting to benefit from this unique knowledge. "What we've seen over the past few years is a radical improvement in the treatment of serious injuries such as spinal damage, purely because of the nature of battlefield injuries," explains Matt Dixon of serious accident claims specialists Sherrington Law. "While the circumstances may be distressing, the fact that such advances in the treatment of serious injuries has to be a ray of hope in an otherwise dark and trying time. Now that knowledge is starting to filter out into the wider medical community and the military is leading the way in best practice techniques for some of the most challenging types of injuries that both civilians and service personnel have to deal with," he adds.

Early treatment could make all the difference

While techniques are still being refined and developed, one thing is clear. Early specialist treatment for [spinal injury claim](#) victims is essential to ensure that victims get the best possible chance at as full a recovery as is possible. "One of the biggest developments that the military is passing on to civilian medicine is the vital role physiotherapy plays in recovery," explains Matt Dixon of Sherrington Law. "Getting spinal injuries victims out of intensive care wards and into an effective and managed programme of physiotherapy has shown to work much more effectively as the body is stimulated to start adapting to its injuries more quickly. That's not to say that we advocate forcing patients to start physiotherapy before they're ready to, but getting a programme of therapy in place as soon as possible is clearly going to benefit the patient both mentally and physically. By getting them to be pro-active in their recovery, the problem of depression that's often a factor in spinal injuries cases can be reduced," he adds.

While the war continues, there will unfortunately be more victims of IEDs and grenade attacks who will need the devoted care and attention of units such as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. But once the war is over, the advances in the treatment of serious injuries of all kinds will be much more advanced. "Necessity is not just the mother of invention, but it is also the mother of medical advancement," says Matt Dixon. "The battlefield makes it necessary for medical experts to develop new ways of treating injuries. That knowledge is added to our existing expertise and for future victims of serious injury, that could be the advancement that they need to make a fuller recovery," he concludes.

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