

Prehospital Management of Open Fractures: Collaborative Audit Across UK Air Ambulances

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Introduction

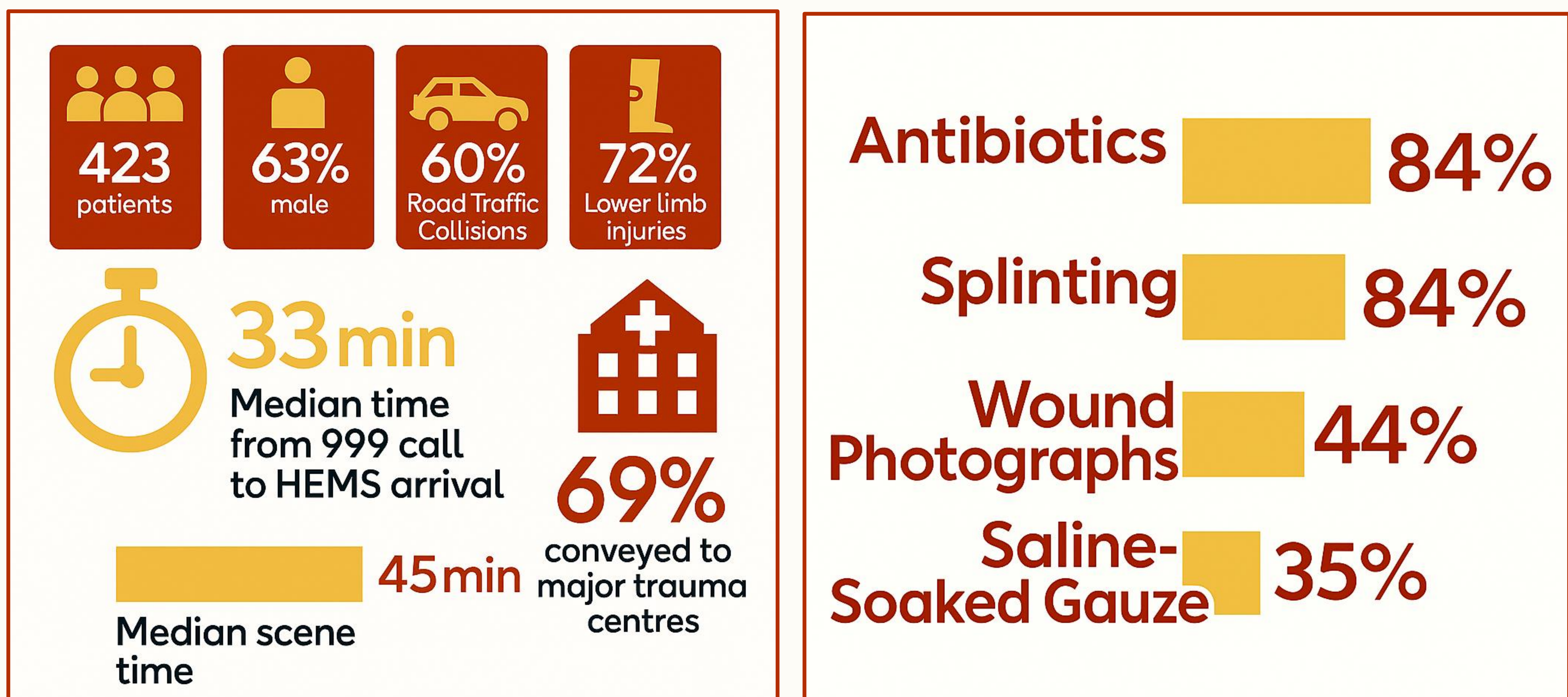
Prehospital management of open fractures is critical for reducing infection risk, preserving limb function, and improving outcomes. However, national-level data on prehospital care has been limited. The National Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Research and Audit Forum (NHRAF) Audit Subgroup initiated a multi-centre audit to assess prehospital management of open fractures. This project tests the feasibility of collaborative audits across air ambulance services, using relevant standards from the British Orthopaedic Association Standards for Trauma guidelines (BOAST 4).

Methods

Seven air ambulance services contributed retrospective data on patients with open limb fractures attended 01/07/22–30/06/23. Exclusions included patients deceased at scene or refusing treatment.

Data were analysed against four prehospital-relevant BOAST 4 standards: (1) antibiotics within 3 hours, (2) photograph of injury in record, (3) saline-soaked gauze dressing, (4) limb splinting. An online dashboard was created, allowing organisations to review their performance in the context of the wider group, with other services anonymised.

Results



Conclusion

This first NHRAF-coordinated audit demonstrates the potential of national collaboration between air ambulances to improve prehospital trauma care.

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