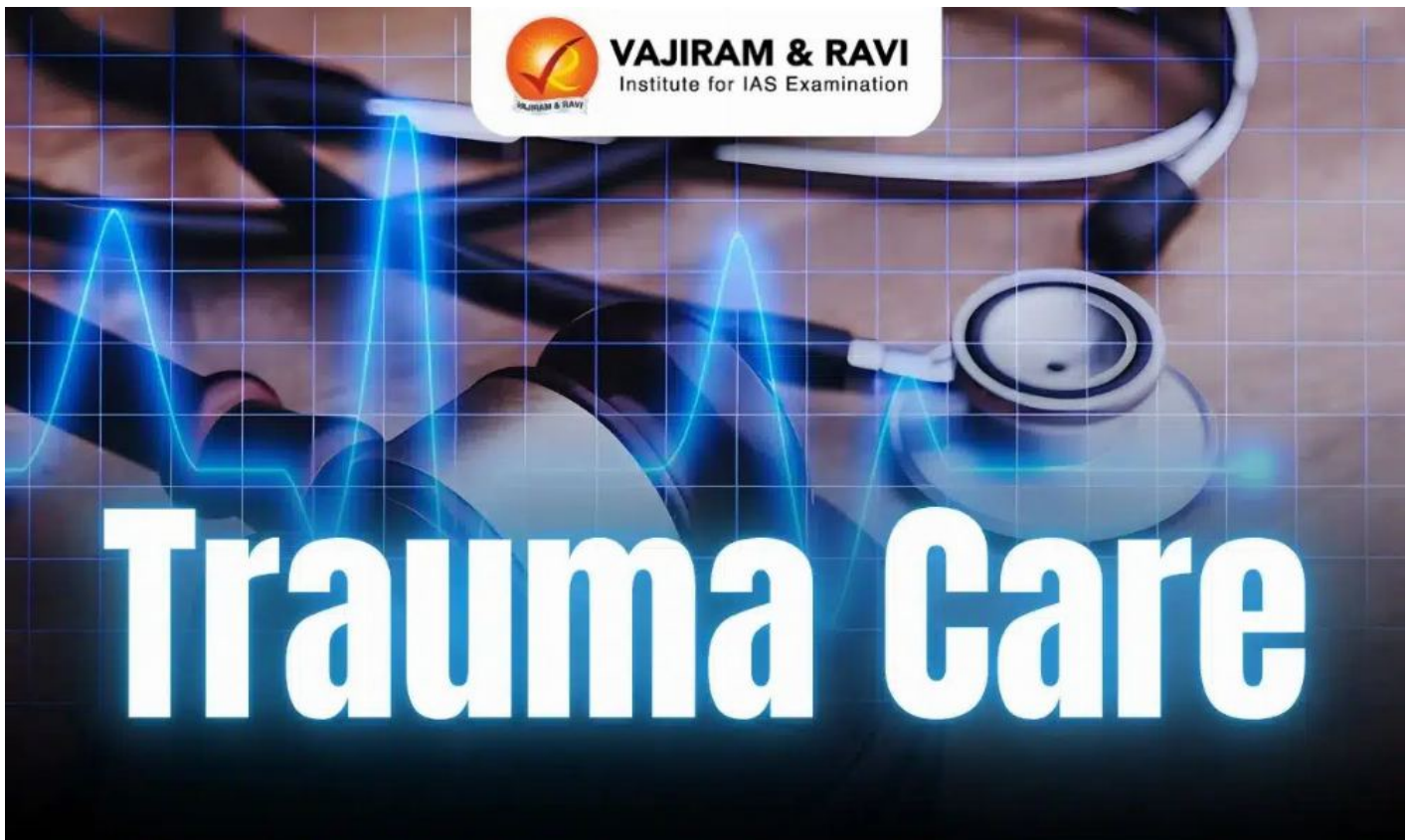


Supreme Court Pushes States to Build Trauma Care Systems

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Trauma Care Latest News

- The Supreme Court's push for a uniform trauma care architecture has revealed that not a single state has fully implemented the key life-saving measures required to improve road crash response during the Golden Hour.

Road Safety and Trauma Care in India

- India has one of the world's worst road safety records, with around 1.77 lakh road fatalities a year.
- A major reason is the weak post-crash response system, especially in the Golden Hour, the first 60 minutes after an accident, when timely medical intervention can mean the difference between life and death.
- To address this, the Supreme Court, acting on a petition by Save LIFE Foundation, asked states to put in place a more uniform trauma care system.

- The core idea was simple: accident victims should be rescued quickly, transported efficiently, treated without delay, and supported by a legal and administrative framework that encourages public help.
- Five measures were especially important:
 - A common emergency number
 - GPS-equipped ambulances
 - A functioning Good Samaritan system
 - A trauma registry
 - A proper rescue protocol
- These form the backbone of any effective trauma response system.

News Summary

- Data submitted by 34 states and Union Territories to the Supreme Court over the last nine months show that not a single state has all five key measures in place.
- This means India still lacks a complete trauma care architecture even after repeated judicial and policy attention.

Emergency Number Integration

- One of the Court's key expectations was the integration of emergency response into **112**, the nationwide emergency number launched in 2019 to combine police, fire, ambulance, highway, and women's helplines.
- Among the eight states that account for about two out of every three road deaths, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh, seven have not fully integrated all emergency numbers into 112. Karnataka did not provide information.
- This matters because multiple helplines create confusion during emergencies, delaying response.

Good Samaritan Protection

- Another major barrier to saving lives is that bystanders often fear harassment by police or hospitals.
- Although the Supreme Court recognised the rights of Good Samaritans in 2016 and the government later notified the Good Samaritan Rules, 2020 under the **Motor Vehicles Act**, implementation remains weak.
- Among the eight high-fatality states:
 - Only Maharashtra and Karnataka have a grievance redressal system for Good Samaritans
 - Four states do not have such a system
 - Two states did not provide full information
- Across all 34 states and UTs, only eight have a grievance system for Good Samaritans.

Trauma Registry

- A trauma registry is a clinical database that tracks the accident victim's journey from the crash site to ambulance transport, hospital care, and discharge.
- It is essential for auditing treatment outcomes and improving policy.

- Yet, five of the eight high-fatality states do not have a trauma registry. Only Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh reported having one.
- Across the country, 22 states do not have a trauma registry, and many still rely on manual records.
- Tamil Nadu appears relatively advanced here, with a trauma care registry that captures pre-hospital ambulance details, reception, resuscitation details, and patient outcomes in real time.

Rescue Protocols

- A proper rescue protocol defines how crash victims are to be safely extracted, stabilised, and transferred to hospitals. It includes both medical and non-medical rescue procedures.
- Among the eight high-fatality states, seven have some form of rescue protocol, but Karnataka does not have a protocol for medical and non-medical rescue and transfer of road crash victims.
- Across all 34 states and UTs, only 17 have a rescue protocol.

GPS-Equipped Ambulances

- The Supreme Court had also sought information on whether all registered ambulances, including private ones, were fitted with GPS and whether their movement could be tracked in real time.
- Although several high-fatality states responded positively, the data often covered only government ambulances, not private ones, making the response incomplete. Nationwide:
 - 13 states either have no GPS or only partial GPS coverage
 - In many cases, GPS is available only in government ambulances
- On whether the tracking dashboard had been made public:
 - Six high-fatality states said they had a dashboard, but it was not public
 - Only Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu said their ambulance tracking dashboard was open to the public
- This means families cannot verify whether the nearest ambulance was actually dispatched.
- Also, seven of the eight high-fatality states do not track ambulance movements in real time by integrating them with the 112 system, making response-time assessment difficult.

State Responses

- Uttar Pradesh, which recorded the highest number of road deaths in 2024, said most emergency numbers had been integrated into 112, except 102 medical services.
- It does not have a separate Good Samaritan grievance system and is still examining a centralised trauma registry.
- Tamil Nadu, the leading state in total road accidents and second in fatalities, reported a relatively detailed rescue protocol and real-time trauma registry, but has only partially integrated emergency numbers.
- Maharashtra said only its MEMS 108 ambulances are fitted with GPS.
- Madhya Pradesh said its Good Samaritan grievance system is still under process, though it has developed a trauma care policy.
- Karnataka said it does not yet have a trauma care registry and currently monitors only 108 Arogya Kavacha ambulances through a central dashboard.
- Rajasthan said its trauma care registry SOP is under process.

- Bihar said trauma data is captured in emergency records, but not separately as a dedicated trauma registry.
- Andhra Pradesh said it already had the 108 emergency system much before 112 was introduced.

Significance

- This issue is important because, according to a 2021 NITI Aayog-AIIMS Emergency and Injury Care Report, at least 30% of all trauma-related deaths in India are attributable to delays in emergency care.
- The gaps identified by the Supreme Court show that road safety is not only about safer roads and better driving behaviour. It is also about what happens after the crash:
 - Can victims be located quickly?
 - Can ambulances reach on time?
 - Will bystanders help without fear?
 - Can treatment data be tracked and improved?
- India's road fatality crisis cannot be reduced meaningfully without a functioning trauma care system.

Source: IE

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