

Emergency Medical Training of Avalanche Professionals: Raising the Standards for Remote Care in Canada

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In Canada, emergency medical training of avalanche professionals who work remotely (guides, park wardens, search and rescue technicians) is typically limited to an episodic, short, intensive, and generalized first aid course that provides basic to intermediate knowledge and practice of well-established and accepted diagnostic and treatment protocols. Due to widespread remote geography and limited rescue availability in Canada, avalanche professionals are most often unaided by on-site advanced medical care while responsible for any possible rescue situation that may arise in their vicinity. A designated advanced-skills medical training course to teach principles and sophisticated applications of care to avalanche professionals may improve overall morbidity and mortality rates in patients who are far afield. By training avalanche professionals to provide immediate, comprehensive, limited advanced techniques under the discretion and approval of an emergency medical regulatory staff, relatively safe and simple life-or-limb saving maneuvers may be instituted within the "golden hour" of initial patient need, thereby increasing optimal outcomes for avalanche victims before they can obtain definitive medical care at a tertiary trauma centre.