Keeping it Safe for Everybody

Medics Should Routinely Use Body Armor

Raymond L. Fowler, MD, FACEP, DABEMS
Chief, Division of Emergency Medical Services
UT Southwestern Medical Center and
Parkland Memorial Hospital
This is a world that seems to afflicted with escalating violence.
What’s the Problem?

In rendering “Out of Hospital” care, we are exposed to the breadth of the human condition.
What’s the Problem?

✧ Street shootings
✧ Violence against Prehospital Personnel
✧ Riots...scenes out of control
All conditions

✦ All ages
✦ All hours
✦ All scenes
After all….

People are generally pretty excited when we respond to them

And sometimes we have some really bad news
So, Terry, I mean REALLY!!!

Should providers enter into an unknown scene with.....

✧ No protection?
✧ Chest / torso protection?
✧ ...plus a helmet?
There is a body of work in the literature on the subject of EMS armor:

PPE is more than BSI protection.

Molino LN JEMS. 2004 Jul;29(7):56-8, 60, 62, 64-7. PMID: 15286618
So what are the potential downsides?

Would we be sending mixed messages to our patients through wearing body armor to routine scenes?
So what are the potential downsides?

Cost!!!

Who pays for it?
So what are the potential downsides?

Restraint of movement
So what are the potential downsides?

Would it work for:
- Not for head trauma if body armor only is worn
- More protection with a helmet
Oh, and Terry....be careful out there
The Military Experience

They have gotten the equipment right

EMS needs to do the same
Tactical Medicine

They have gotten the equipment right

EMS needs to do the same
What are we NOT talking about???
Tucson Tech: His body armor concept could one day hit market
“The carpenter-turned-inventor says his Tucson company's patented nano-technology can turn aluminum into a nearly impenetrable, lightweight armor for bodies and vehicles. The technology - with the sci-fi name of Kryron - also can create ultra-conductive and corrosion-resistant wire and electrical components, or help form tough metal plating on plastics and other non-metals, says Bourque, founder and CEO of Bourque Industries Inc.”
A poll of the Eagles Coalition
January 20, 2015
7 a.m. – 1 p.m. Central time

34 responding agencies
Represents some 60,000,000
citizen lives covered
No policy on use of body armor by EMS Personnel

21 EMS Medical Directors replied that no policy is in place for body armor use routinely by EMS Personnel (SWAT-use typically mandatory)
Body Armor Permitted but not Mandatory

9 EMS Medical Directors replied that body armor use by EMS Personnel is permitted
Body Armor Provided Mandatory

4 EMS Medical Directors replied that body armor use by EMS Personnel is mandatory and equipment is provided.
Eagles Poll: Does your EMS System have a Policy on Body Armor?
“During the times of civil unrest that ---- (has) had yes, but not routine use of body armor during normal day to day operations.”
“I believe we should but don't currently have a policy in place. We have swat medics with full PPE. I think all personnel should have some form of protection just as a medic should wear a face shield when intubating.”
“Our tactical medics have them. We are in the process of outfitting a rescue squad from the fire department that would have them. No more than 5.”
“We have body armor in all ALS ambulances as part of our rapid assessment medical support program for active shooter incidents.”
“We’ve offered it through the Department to all field personnel since October of 2006. If they opt out, they must sign a waiver. The only policy as to when to wear them is at the discretion of the member.”
“No body armor in ----. I would reject any use of this except for our tactical personnel on tactical assignments. I firmly believe that there should be no confusion as to the roles of Police from Fire/EMS, and don’t want the public to begin to see blurring of the roles”
“You hear about violence against EMS personnel every day....the trend will be that we have to make that level of PPE available to the principles...”

*Is Body Armor a form of PPE???
What will nurse do after beating Ebola? Hug her dog, of course

By Michael Martinez and Mark Bider, CNN
updated 3:19 PM EDT, Fri October 24, 2014

Source: CNN
But in the final analysis... nothing will protect against every possibility
Ruminations upon Closing
We have been giving “lip service” to the use of PPE for generations

We are very, VERY lucky that more providers have not gotten hurt

We must broaden the definition of PPE to include as many areas as we can that protect our personnel
We can choose to act, or we can be passive.

It is clear from these recurrent events that failure to prepare....and insist on excellence and consistency...presents a grave hazard.
I AM
SHOUTING!!!
And Terry, may you live in interesting times.

Crisis is DANGER mixed with opportunity.

Always create the crisis on YOUR timeline!