



**OPERATIONAL  
RESEARCH  
SNAPSHOT**

## ***Providing Physiotherapy for Trauma Patients in Low- and Middle-Income Countries***



**Physiotherapy helps patients regain independence after acute trauma and surgery. Yet hospitals in low- or middle-income countries only offer limited rehabilitation services, and there is little evidence on the added value for patients in humanitarian settings.**

From 2011 to 2015, Handicap International and Médecins Sans Frontières offered physiotherapy to patients at the Kunduz Trauma Center in Afghanistan, treating injuries caused by violence or accidents.

A functional score was developed to measure patients' independence and mobility performing daily activities.

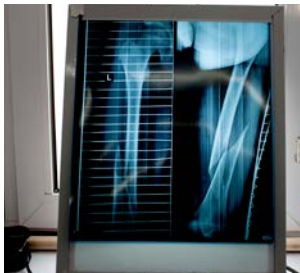
The score helps to evaluate how physiotherapy supports rehabilitation and prioritize rehabilitation treatment.

This operational research study looked at the feasibility of using the functional score in a humanitarian setting, and documented how patients receiving physiotherapy improved.





**T**he functional score proved a helpful and culturally sensitive tool in the Kunduz Trauma Centre. By grading trauma patients' independence in performing 20 daily activities like eating, washing, walking, or squatting, the score provides an easy-to-use indicator on how patients recover functionally.



**B**etween January and June 2015, 10,500 physiotherapy sessions were provided to 1,410 patients with brain injury, limb fractures, or multiple injuries. In the inpatient ward, 61.7% of patients received physiotherapy within two days of admission, attending an average total of 6.6 sessions per person.



**T**rauma patients receiving physiotherapy improved overall, showing a trend towards less pain and higher independence. Amongst patients assessed at the beginning and end of treatment, 32.2% in inpatient care and 79.0% at the outpatient department were reported completely independent.



## IMPLEMENTATION

The simplified functional score is currently used or being implemented in projects in Haiti, Burundi, Iraq, Yemen, and Gaza, where it helps to assess patients' condition, plan treatment, and serves as a clinical performance indicator. The Kunduz Trauma Center was destroyed by a US Air Force attack in October 2015.

Based on the study findings, an internationally funded research project was launched to confirm the functional score is valid and relevant across cultural contexts in projects in Burundi, Haiti, and Iraq. In these missions, the score will also help to identify what treatments best support recovery of trauma patients, and to improve models of care.

Original Study: Gohy, B; Ali, E; Van den Bergh, R; Schillberg, E; Nasim, M; Naimi, MM; Cheréstal, S; Falipou, P; Weerts, E; Skelton, P; Van Overloop, C; Trelles, M (2016): Early physical and functional rehabilitation of trauma patients in the Médecins Sans Frontières trauma centre in Kunduz, Afghanistan: luxury or necessity? International Health.

Pictures: Michael Goldfarb/MSF, Florian Serieux/MSF, Ehab Zawati/MSF



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