

Geriatric trauma

Unique aspects:

- Less likely to suffer injuries, More likely to have fatal outcome
- 80% return to normal function
- Most frequently, falls, MVAs and burns
- Most falls don't result in severe injuries
- Alcohol predisposes them to fall over, crash their cars or burn themselves

MEDICATIONS:

- the elderly are overmedicated with drugs, , outside the scope of this review

ELDER ABUSE

- contusions to inner arms or legs, mastoid bruises, ear bruises, palm bruises
- axillary and wrist abrasions from restraints
- nasal bridge and temple injuries from glasses
- black eyes, oral injury, unusual patterns of alopecia
- untreated decubitus ulcers and untreated fractures
- multiple injuries in various stages of evolution, eye and nose injuries, contact burns

Airway:

- Dentures should stay in while bagging and masking, they improve the seal
- Laryngeal fractures are more common because the larynx is calcified
- Spines are osteoarthritic, fossilized

Breathing:

- Forget about CO2 retention, just ventilate them with as much oxygen as they need
- Chest injury = greater mortality than young people

Circulation and Shock:

- By 65 yrs of age, 50% of people have coronary artery stenosis
- Kidney function is also impaired, so acute renal failure occurs more often
- MAXIMAL HEART RATE FORMULA: 220 minus the age.
- NORMAL SYSTOLIC AND NORMAL HEART RATE DO NOT EXCLUDE HYPOVOLEMIA
- **Hypotension + metabolic acidosis = almost always equals death**
- Volume is replaced in the same way as for young people
- If in doubt, do a laparotomy – risk of non-operative management for solid organ injury is too great

Brain and spinal cord injuries

- They are more prone to subdurals – 3 times more frequent
- Degenerating dehydrated discs reduce the axial load capacity of the spine

Exposure and environment

- Thermoregulation is impaired – there is less subcutaneous tissue

Musculoskeletal system trauma:

- Loss of ligamentous and bony elasticity = increased risk of rupture/fracture as well as surrounding soft tissue injury
- Reduced muscle mass = reduced joint stability
- Osteoporosis affects 50% of them
- Annual risk of hip fracture = 1% in men and 2% in women
- Greatly increased risk of long bone fractures
- Management aims at EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOBILIZATION = greater is the risk of deconditioning

Nutritional support:

- Early adequate nutrition = greatly reduced rate of complications