

Frequently Asked Questions



ABOUT THE STEPPING STRONG CENTER

What is The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation?

Founded by survivors of the Boston Marathon bombing, The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation at Brigham and Women's Hospital transforms how we prevent, treat, and recover from traumatic injury, a leading cause of death in the United States. Through research grants, fellowships, educational programs, and patient-focused initiatives, the center unites healthcare professionals, policymakers, and community members to revolutionize trauma care and rebuild lives.

What should I know about your name and what you do?

Our full name is "The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation," though we're commonly known as "the Stepping Strong Center." As a center for trauma research and care within Mass General Brigham, we're sometimes mistaken for a foundation or fund. While we do provide research grants and raise funds, we are a center that advances trauma care through research, education, and innovative programs.

How is the Stepping Strong Center affiliated with Mass General Brigham?

The Stepping Strong Center is a trauma research and education center within the Mass General Brigham (MGB) healthcare system. Housed within Brigham and Women's Hospital, our collaborations, programs, and initiatives span across the entire MGB system.

Does the Stepping Strong Center see patients directly?

The Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation does not see, consult, or treat patients directly. However, through our programs and initiatives, we fund research, lead educational efforts, inspire advocacy, and support patient-centered initiatives. We bring innovative ideas to life that are changing and improving the continuum of trauma care for patients from prevention to treatment and recovery.

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

What is "trauma"?

Trauma or traumatic injury is severe or life-threatening bodily harm resulting from sudden intentional or unintentional exposure to an external force or substance. Examples include motor vehicle crashes, violence-related injuries, drowning, burns, and falls.

What is the continuum of trauma care?

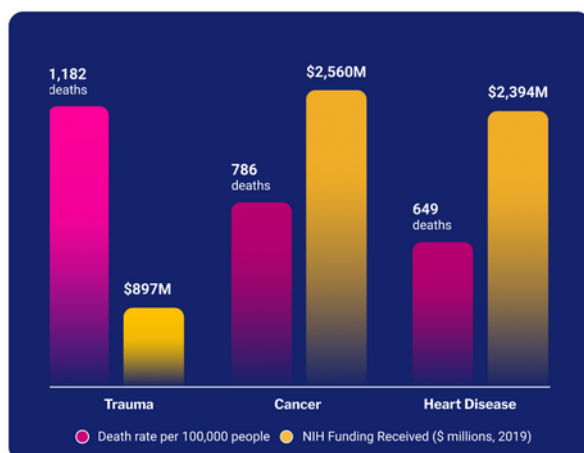


How is trauma multidisciplinary?

Trauma care requires numerous healthcare professionals to work together across the entire continuum of care. From the initial emergency response by EMS personnel, through hospital-based specialists like emergency physicians, orthopedic surgeons, and plastic surgeons, to recovery professionals including occupational therapists, physical therapists, and social workers, trauma patients require coordinated care from experts at every stage. This multidisciplinary approach is central to the Stepping Strong Center's mission, as we foster collaborations across all these disciplines and develop innovative approaches and solutions that address every stage of trauma care.

Why is trauma research so important?

Trauma is the #1 cause of death for people ages 44 and younger in the United States, yet it receives significantly less research funding compared to other leading causes of death like heart disease and cancer. The following chart displays the relationship between the age-adjusted death rate of major health issues and the federal funding each receives.



Key takeaways:

- Trauma accounts for the **highest age-adjusted death rate** (1,182 deaths per 100,000 people)
- Despite this, trauma research received the **least amount of funding** (less than 2% of federal funding)
- Cancer and heart disease receive significantly more funding, **despite resulting in fewer deaths compared to trauma**

Source: Wang A, Xiang H. (2022). U.S. Leading Causes of Death and Years of Potential Life Lost, 1981-2019: Implications for Surgical Research. *Journal of Surgical Research*, 281, 338-344. DOI: 10.1016/j.jss.2022.06.071

How common are traumatic injuries?

- Trauma can happen to anyone, at any time
- Every hour, 26 people die from a traumatic injury
- In 2023, trauma incidents accounted for over 300,000 deaths in the U.S.
- Traumatic injuries comprise 40% of visits to emergency departments

OUR IMPACT

What has the Stepping Strong Center accomplished?

Since our founding in 2014, we have:

- Raised more than \$33.3 million for trauma innovation to advance lifesaving treatments and improve patient outcomes
- Funded 73 multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional research projects developing novel approaches and improving emergency protocols for survivors
- Trained 15 fellows who are delivering advanced treatment at major medical centers

How many people have been impacted by the center's Emergency Response trainings?

Our Stepping Strong Emergency Response Training has reached:

- 7,680 people trained overall, including in
 - 2,381 people trained in suicide prevention
 - 3,885 people trained in bleeding control
 - 1,031 people trained in overdose response

How does the Stepping Strong Boston Marathon team support the mission?

Since its inception in 2014, the marathon team has raised nearly \$15 million in support of the Stepping Strong Center, demonstrating the power of community involvement in advancing the field of trauma.

When you support a member of the Stepping Strong Boston Marathon Team, you're helping us achieve our vision of transforming trauma care and restoring hope for civilian and military heroes worldwide who have suffered devastating traumatic injuries.

GET INVOLVED

Follow Us On Social Media

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How can I support the Stepping Strong Center?

Run for the Stepping Strong Center with one (or more) of the following teams:

- Boston Marathon
- Boston 10K
- Boston 5K
- Falmouth Road Race
- Run Your Own Race

Or, participate and support by:

- Getting trained in emergency response programs
- Joining our Stepping Strong Young Professionals Council
- Signing up for Step Up for Stepping Strong in May
- Nominating a courageous person for the Stepping Strong Hero Award

For more information, visit BWHSteppingStrong.org or email steppingstrong@bwh.harvard.edu