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## NTDB™ data points

# The lethality of intent

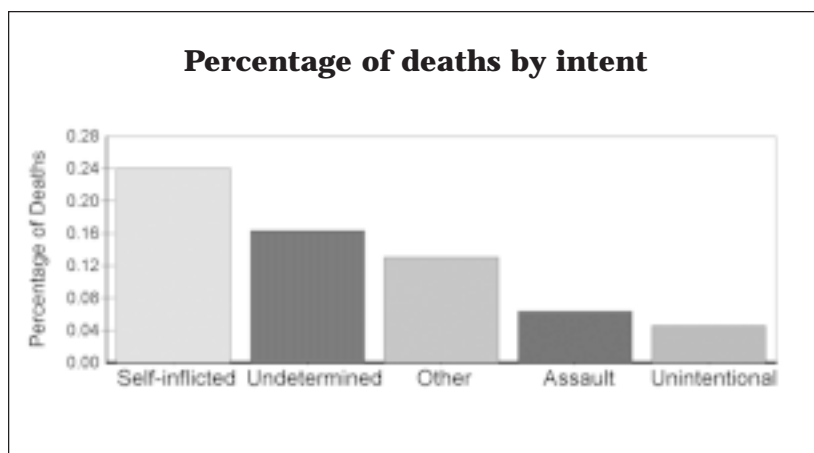
by Richard J. Fantus, MD, FACS, Chicago, IL, and John Fildes, MD, FACS, Las Vegas, NV

This month we continue to explore the transition to the use of the external cause of injury code (E-code) groupings that were developed by the international injury prevention community. When we take a look at the various intent groupings and their associated number of deaths, we see a sobering picture. The two major intentional injury groups have a significantly higher lethality when compared to the unintentional group. This lethal trend is depicted in the graph on this page.

The assault grouping has a one-and-a-half-fold increase in percentage of deaths, while the self-inflicted group has a staggering six-fold increase in lethality.

Many of us who work in trauma centers are aware that this final self-event is not always the patient's first attempt. There is a much larger group of patients who survive their self-inflicted event. In the records contained in the *Annual Report for 2003* of the National Trauma Data Bank™, the survivors account for 75 percent of this category.

Although there are no official statistics on attempted nonfatal actions, it is estimated from data collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that there are at least eight to 20 attempts for each death by



Percentage of deaths of each intent (percentage of deaths = number of deaths divided by the number of patients  $\times$  100 by intent).

suicide. This finding places an additional responsibility on trauma care providers when caring for this group of patients.

For the 75 percent of survivors, we are obligated to not only initiate the necessary injury-related treatment, but also take into account the need for treating the patient's mental health. With timely intervention and counseling, we may be able to have an impact on decreasing repeat attempts in the future.

While the NTDB reports on records it contains, these data represent real patients and real opportunities for intervention and prevention. By initiating

and tracking prevention strategies that target this self-intent group, we should see with time a decrease in the number of self-inflicted records per year reported to the NTDB.

Throughout the year we will be highlighting these data through brief monthly reports in the *Bulletin*. For a complete copy of the *NTDB Annual Report 2003*, visit us online at <http://www.facs.org/trauma/ntdbannualreport2003.pdf>.

If you are interested in submitting your trauma center's data, contact Melanie L. Neal, Manager, NTDB, at [mneal@facs.org](mailto:mneal@facs.org).