

Surgeons back funding for care analysis

By [Liz Kowalczyk](#) | GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 19, 2013

Boston's teaching hospitals have been so widely praised for saving dozens of Marathon bombing victims that trauma surgeons worry the state will grow complacent. They met with legislators Tuesday to remind them that luck and timing played a role on Patriot's Day, and that the trauma system still has gaps that require attention.

Surgeons from Boston Children's, Massachusetts General, Newton-Wellesley, and Mount Auburn hospitals and Boston Medical Center asked the Legislature for more funding for state public health staff to better coordinate trauma care and track patient outcomes.

"Legislators were interested in hearing details about why management of these patients was so successful, and it was," said Dr. Frederick Millham of Newton-Wellesley and chairman of the Statewide Trauma Committee, a volunteer group established by the Legislature in 2000 that helps develop policy on trauma care. "But many of us were worried that people in the state were going to start patting themselves on the back on what a wonderful trauma system we have and didn't this prove it. The best minute to have a mass casualty event is 3 p.m. on Patriots Day."

At the time of the attack, doctors, emergency medical personnel, police, and firefighters were stationed on Boylston Street for the race. Routine shift changes were underway at the hospitals, meaning extra staff was on hand to treat victims.

But trauma surgeons stressed this may not be the case next time. They want the Legislature to support changes to the trauma committee, including adding community hospitals with trauma programs to its membership.

The Department of Public Health also needs more money to manage the state's trauma resources, said the surgeons, who want the office of emergency medical services to hire a manager and an epidemiologist dedicated to trauma care. They would update the state's trauma plan and research outcomes using the State Trauma Registry, which collects data on every patient who visits an emergency department in Massachusetts.

"It's a gold mine that is going unused," said Dr. George Velmahos, head of trauma at Mass. General.

"We have all the surgeons, hospitals, and ambulances that we need," Millham said. "How are they doing? We don't know. We were worried the success of (care in the) Marathon bombing would make people think everything was fine. We're trying to seize the moment while we have their ear."

Liz Kowalczyk can be reached at kowalczyk@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter [@GlobeLizK](https://twitter.com/GlobeLizK).