



Mamta Swaroop, MD

THE FIRST RESPONDER

In 2016, there were 4,368 shootings in Chicago, many on the South Side. That part of the city lacks a level I trauma center; depending on their location, victims can be more than five miles from the nearest one. But in the first hour after being shot, every minute counts, says Mamta Swaroop, MD, a trauma surgeon at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. "The longer it takes a person who is bleeding to get to us, the harder it will be to save them."

Swaroop's challenge: find a way to keep the injured alive long enough to make it to her trauma bay. With the support of Northwestern University, she conducted focus groups with community advocates as well as South Side residents to hear about the violence they'd witnessed and what they wished they could have done to help. And in January 2017, she launched the Chicago South Side Trauma First Responders course. In the free three-hour class, participants learn how

to tie a tourniquet with a T-shirt or scarf, how to put unconscious patients in the side-tilt recovery position, how to safely transport people who can't walk on their own, and other simple yet essential techniques that can buy the wounded precious minutes. Swaroop coordinated with CeaseFire Chicago, a community violence prevention organization, as well as local high schools, and spread the word via social media. She's since taught lifesaving skills to more than 150 adults and teens.

Caleb Jacobs, 24, signed up for the class because he wanted to feel more prepared. He'd met Swaroop in 2015, after he was robbed and stabbed in the abdomen while walking in downtown Chicago; she helped him through his recovery and follow-up care. "Her class opened up my mind to the idea that I could use ordinary objects to help save someone's life," Jacobs says. "That's pretty cool." —ASHLEY ALTUS



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