

REVIEW

Viscoelastic monitoring in trauma resuscitation

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Abstract

Background: Traumatic injury results in both physical and physiologic insult. Successful care of the trauma patient depends upon timely correction of both physical and biochemical injury. Trauma-induced coagulopathy is a derangement of hemostasis and thrombosis that develops rapidly and can be fatal if not corrected. Viscoelastic monitoring (VEM) assays have been developed to provide rapid, accurate, and relatively comprehensive depictions of an individual's coagulation profile. VEM are increasingly being integrated into trauma resuscitation guidelines to provide dynamic and individualized guidance to correct coagulopathy.

Study Design and Methods: We performed a narrative review of the search terms viscoelastic, thromboelastography, thromboelastometry, TEG, ROTEM, trauma, injury, resuscitation, and coagulopathy using PubMed. Particular focus was directed to articles describing algorithms for management of traumatic coagulopathy based on VEM assay parameters.

Results: Our search identified 16 papers with VEM-guided resuscitation strategies in adult patients based on TEG, 12 such protocols in adults based on ROTEM, 1 protocol for children based on TEG, and 2 protocols for children based on ROTEM.

Conclusions: This review presents evidence to support VEM use to detect traumatic coagulopathy, discusses the role of VEM in trauma resuscitation, provides a summary of proposed treatment algorithms, and discusses pending questions in the field.

1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 | Trauma resuscitation

Trauma is a leading cause of death and disability worldwide.¹ Mortality from trauma is classically described as occurring in a trimodal distribution: immediate (minutes), early (hours), and late (weeks).² Although the time-to-death histogram has shifted in the last four decades, the majority of deaths still occur within 24 hours of injury.^{3–5} Hemorrhage is the driving factor in approximately 50% of these early deaths, and hemorrhagic shock occurring in this window is a major contributor to delayed organ failure

and late mortality.⁶ Trauma-specific hemostatic dysfunction, *i.e.* trauma-induced coagulopathy (TIC), is an umbrella term that encompasses multiple mechanisms of failing hemostasis as well as later thrombotic complications.⁷ TIC develops immediately after injury and is independent of other known contributors to coagulopathy including environmental exposure and crystalloid resuscitation.^{7–11} Patients who develop TIC are at increased risk for death,⁷ increased transfusion requirements and delayed complications including organ failure and sepsis.^{10–12}

Prompt and appropriate resuscitation, in coordination with control of hemorrhage, is a key target in all injured patients. Resuscitative strategies have moved away from a

crystalloid-centric approach and toward a focus on restoration of hemostasis through damage control resuscitation (DCR). The principal tenants of DCR are (a) hemorrhage control, (b) permissive hypotension, and (c) prevention/correction of TIC.¹³ Hemorrhage control is achieved in the operating room or interventional radiology suite. Permissive hypotension (systolic blood pressure <90) in both blunt and penetrating trauma is proposed to facilitate hemostasis through reduced pressure on new clot and has been shown to decrease mortality in adults compared to resuscitation to normotension.^{14–18} Mitigation of TIC via appropriate blood product transfusion and optimal critical care is necessary to prevent further blood loss and curtail any hemostatic or inflammatory derangements. DCR treatments run in parallel to achieve the goal of stopping further blood loss and restoring blood volume with biologically useful substrate.

Empiric transfusion ratios of packed red blood cells (RBCs), platelets (PLT), and fresh-frozen plasma (FFP) have received considerable attention in adult^{19–23} and to a lesser extent in pediatric patients.^{24–28} Studies generally support increased plasma ratios with most authors favoring a “balanced” (1:1:1) strategy although superiority of a specific ratio has not obtained consensus.^{29,30} As an alternative to component transfusion, early data suggest some benefit to cold-stored low titer group O whole blood transfusion in trauma patients.^{31–34} The importance of timely correction of homeostasis is demonstrated through benefit of pre-hospital administration of blood products^{35,36} particularly in the setting of transport times.^{37,38} In supplement to empiric transfusion strategies, individualized goal-directed transfusion^{39–41} has been proposed and will be discussed in this review.

1.2 | Assays for active monitoring of resuscitation

Success of a monitored resuscitation strategy is heavily dependent upon the assay(s) used to guide decision making. We will briefly discuss the rationale and interpretation of conventional coagulation tests (CCTs) and viscoelastic monitoring (VEM) assays in the context of injured patients. Further details on interpretation and science supporting these tests can be found in additional articles in this supplement.

1.2.1 | Conventional coagulation tests in trauma-induced coagulopathy

CCTs including international normalized ratio (INR), prothrombin time (PT), activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT), fibrinogen level, and platelet counts are routinely used in perioperative assessment of hemostatic function

and are therefore familiar to the clinician. INR ≥ 1.3 has been used to define TIC in adults and children,^{10,11} and is associated with increased mortality and functional disability.^{42–47} Prolonged aPTT, low fibrinogen, and altered platelet function have similarly been correlated with poor outcomes in pediatric^{46,48,49} and adult^{49–52} trauma patients. Although CCTs benefit from familiarity of interpretation, they are of limited sensitivity and specificity in predicting response to resuscitation,⁵³ they are not reliably associated with clinical coagulopathy, and were not developed for evaluation of TIC.^{54–56} Furthermore, these plasma-based tests do not account for the contribution of the endothelium, platelets, and other critical components of hemostasis and known contributors to TIC. Of crucial importance in trauma patients, CCTs suffer from turn-around times of 30 to 60 minutes^{57,58} and are therefore unable to effectively guide resuscitation in the injured/hemorrhaging patient with dynamic hemostatic dysfunction evolving over the course of minutes.

1.2.2 | Viscoelastic monitoring

In contrast to CCTs, VEM assays are whole blood tests that provide data describing the kinetics of a clot: from time to clot formation (fibrin cross-linking), to maximal clot strength (platelet function), and finally clot breakdown (fibrinolysis).⁵⁹ VEM assays can be utilized at the point of care, with results useful in guiding resuscitation available within 5 minutes.^{57,60} The two primary platforms for such tests are thromboelastography (TEG, Haemonetics) and thromboelastometry (ROTEM, Tem International GmbH). The first mention of VEM evaluation of injured patients dates from 1977⁶¹; however, the first formal study to suggest possible use in guiding trauma resuscitation was not published until two decades later.⁶² Based on the substantial body of literature that has accumulated since that time, VEM has been incorporated into the American College of Surgeons' Advanced Trauma Life Support recommendations.⁶³ VEM availability is suggested in all US level 1 and level 2 trauma centers; however, utilization remains low with only 9% to 18% of sites incorporating VEM into their transfusion algorithms.^{64,65} Lack of consistent practices across trauma centers is likely a function of limited outcome-based studies and limited familiarity with VEM interpretation.

1.3 | Test parameters

To understand VEM guided resuscitation strategies, a basic understanding of VEM assay parameters (Table 1) and test interpretation is essential. Both TEG and

TABLE 1 Common VEM tests and associated parameters

Abbreviation	Description
TEG	Thromboelastography
rTEG	Rapid TEG
CK TEG	Citrated kaolin TEG
FF TEG	Functional fibrinogen TEG
Hep TEG	Heparinase TEG
R	Reaction time
ACT	Activated clotting time
K	Time to standard clot firmness
α	Slope between R and K (or CT and MCF)
MA	Maximal amplitude
Ly30	Lysis fraction at 30 min
EPL	Estimated percent lysis
ROTEM	Rotational thromboelastometry
EXTEM	Extrinsic ROTEM
INTEM	Intrinsic ROTEM
FIBTEM	Fibrin-based ROTEM
HEPTEM	Heparinase ROTEM
TRAPTEM	Thrombin activating peptide ROTEM
ADPTEM	ADP platelet aggregometry ROTEM
APTEM	Aprotinin ROTEM
CT	Clotting time
CA5	Clot amplitude at 5 min
CA10	Clot amplitude at 10 min
MCF	Maximal clot firmness
LI30	Lysis index (Unlysed fraction at 30 min)
LI60	Lysis index (Unlysed fraction at 60 min)
ML	Maximal lysis

ROTEM measure clot initiation, kinetics, strength, and dissolution (Table 2). Although similar in variables measured and mechanics of evaluation, side-by-side comparisons show weak or no association between the two tests^{66–68} thus limiting direct comparison. Nevertheless, TEG and ROTEM tracings depict similar hemostatic functions (Figure 1) and are “substantially equivalent”⁶⁹ in terms of performance if not directly comparable. General resuscitative strategies based on abnormalities in these basic parameters are listed in Table 2.

1.4 | Logistics in trauma

Benefits of VEM-guided trauma resuscitation rely on accuracy of testing, rapid performance and availability, a strategy of iterative testing, and integration of results with clinical judgment based on the patient's injuries and hemodynamics.

We have previously published a description of the key logistic elements in achieving these aims.⁷⁰ Accuracy of test results is instrument, operator, and sample dependent. Instruments should be calibrated to manufacturer specifications and operators should be trained to execute sample processing and analysis in a standardized fashion. Sample preparation begins with collection in the trauma bay. For traditional VEM, blood samples are collected in citrated tubes, sent to processing via pneumatic tube carrier, and analyzed immediately upon arrival to the laboratory. The ROTEM delta platform is less sensitive to motion than the TEG 5000 system,⁷¹ and may therefore be available in or near the trauma bay rather than in a well-controlled laboratory. At our institution, the tracing is viewable in real time on the hospital-wide computer system via remote-viewing platform. Others have described similar measures including display of VEM results in the trauma bay.⁵⁷ Access to data on a system-wide platform is essential in the trauma patient given the potential for rapid transit between locations (eg, trauma bay, radiology, interventional radiology, operating room, and/or intensive care unit) during their initial resuscitation.^{70,72} Live data availability facilitates timely decision making and the provision of a hemostatic resuscitation that is tailored to the injured patient's specific and dynamic needs.

With the advent of point-of-care devices such as the TEG 6s,^{73,74} ROTEM Sigma,⁷⁵ and Hemosonics Quantra⁷⁶ and validation of the TEG 6s in trauma patients,⁷⁷ several of the above barriers to widespread VEM use may be eliminated.⁷⁸ In particular, sample preparation and transport are eliminated with point-of-care devices, and the technical challenges of sample handling and testing are greatly reduced. In addition to providing rapid data availability in the trauma bay without need for laboratory processing, such advances raise the possibility of pre-hospital viscoelastic testing. Notably, the TEG 6s has been tested in simulated environments of aeromedical evacuation^{71,79,80} and ground transport.⁸¹ Although point-of-care assays correlate relatively well with traditional VEM assays,^{73,74,77,80–82} correlation is variable and environment dependent.^{71,80,81} As such, further work is required to develop data-driven thresholds for point-of-care VEM guided resuscitation in the trauma bay and pre-hospital setting.

2 | RESEARCH

2.1 | Validation of VEM against CCT and patient outcomes

2.1.1 | Plasma clotting factor function

Plasma clotting factors contribute to the classically described intrinsic and extrinsic clotting cascade and are

TABLE 2 Comparison of TEG and ROTEM parameters

Hemostatic function	Primary blood component	Variable	Measurement ^a	Treatment
Clot initiation	Plasma factors	Time to first clot (2 mm deflection above baseline)	TEG: R/ACT ROTEM: CT (clotting time)	Plasma, FFP, PCC
Clot propagation	Fibrinogen	Time to standard clot firmness (from 2 mm above baseline to 20 mm above baseline)	TEG: K ROTEM: CFT (clot formation time)	Fibrinogen (cryoprecipitate)
	Fibrinogen	Rate of increase in clot	TEG: α (slope between R and K) ROTEM: α (angle of tangent at 2 mm) OR CA5 (clot amplitude at 5 min)	Fibrinogen (cryoprecipitate)
Clot strength	Platelets	Maximum strength (height of tracing)	TEG: MA (maximal amplitude) ROTEM: MCF (maximal clot firmness)	Platelets, cryoprecipitate, DDAVP
Fibrinolysis	Plasmin	Degradation of clot (% amplitude)	TEG: Ly30 ROTEM: LI (lysis index)	Tranexamic acid, ϵ -aminocaproic acid

Abbreviations: ACT, activated clotting time; CA5 (clot amplitude at 5 min); CFT, clot formation time; CT, clotting time; DDAVP, desmopressin; FFP, fresh frozen plasma; K, time from end of R until amplitude reaches 20 mm; LI, lysis index; Ly30, lysis fraction at 30 min; MA, maximal amplitude; MCF, maximal clot firmness; PCC, prothrombin complex concentrate; R, reaction time; ROTEM, rotational thromboelastometry; TEG, thromboelastography; α , slope between R and K (for TEG) or slope between CT and MCF (for ROTEM).

^aMeasurements and interventions described are for simple VEM limited to TEG, rapid TEG, EXTEM, and INTEM assays. Interpretation and resuscitation based off of more specific assays (eg, FIBTEM) is described in the text with details provided in Table 3 and Table 4.

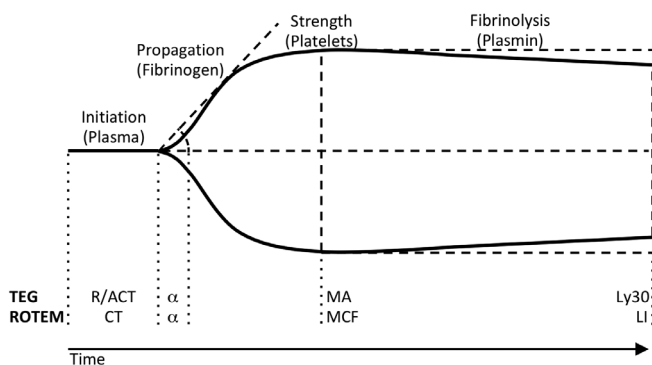


FIGURE 1 Coagulation parameters measured by VEM. Clot initiation is a function of plasma proteins and is measured as time to deviation from baseline by 2 mm in TEG (R - TEG, ACT - rTEG) and ROTEM assays (CT). Clot propagation is a function of fibrinogen deposition and is measured by the angle (α) of divergence from baseline for both TEG and ROTEM. Maximal clot strength is principally controlled by platelet function and is measured as the distance of tracing deviation from baseline for both TEG (MA) and ROTEM (MCF). Degradation of clot, or fibrinolysis, is controlled principally by plasmin and is measured as the percent decrease in amplitude at 30 minutes for TEG (Ly30) and as the percent of maximal amplitude remaining at 30 minutes for ROTEM (LI)

historically evaluated by aPTT and PT/INR, respectively. In early investigations, TIC was commonly defined as INR greater than 1.2 based on increased risk of mortality

and association with increased injury severity.^{7,10} Such findings led to the initial description of TIC; however, there is increasing recognition that INR likely serves as a biomarker of TIC and injury severity, but does not define the underlying pathophysiology of dysregulated hemostasis in trauma. While efforts have been made to correlate VEM parameters with CCT parameters including INR, there are overlapping, but distinct biochemical mechanisms described by these assays.⁸³ For example, in one study of combat casualties requiring massive transfusion, 64% had abnormal TEG values but only 10% of the same patients had PT/INR or aPTT abnormalities.⁸⁴

Although the most recent Cochrane review did not find sufficient evidence to support TEG or ROTEM use in diagnosing TIC,⁸⁵ the practice continues to evolve based on emerging data. Furthermore, this Cochrane Review utilized CCT as the “gold standard” to which TEG/ROTEM were compared despite a lack of validation of CCT in trauma, making the approach inherently flawed. A large multinational randomized controlled trial comparing VEM-guided resuscitation against CCT-guided resuscitation (iTACTIC, ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT02593877),⁸⁶ proposed data-driven thresholds to define TIC (INR > 1.2), hypofibrinogenemia (<2.0 g/L), and thrombocytopenia (plt < 100 × 10⁹ cells/L) for TEG and ROTEM platforms.⁸⁷ Multiple variables were found to have acceptable receiver operator characteristics to discriminate clotting factor dysfunction, hypofibrinogenemia, hyperfibrinolysis, and

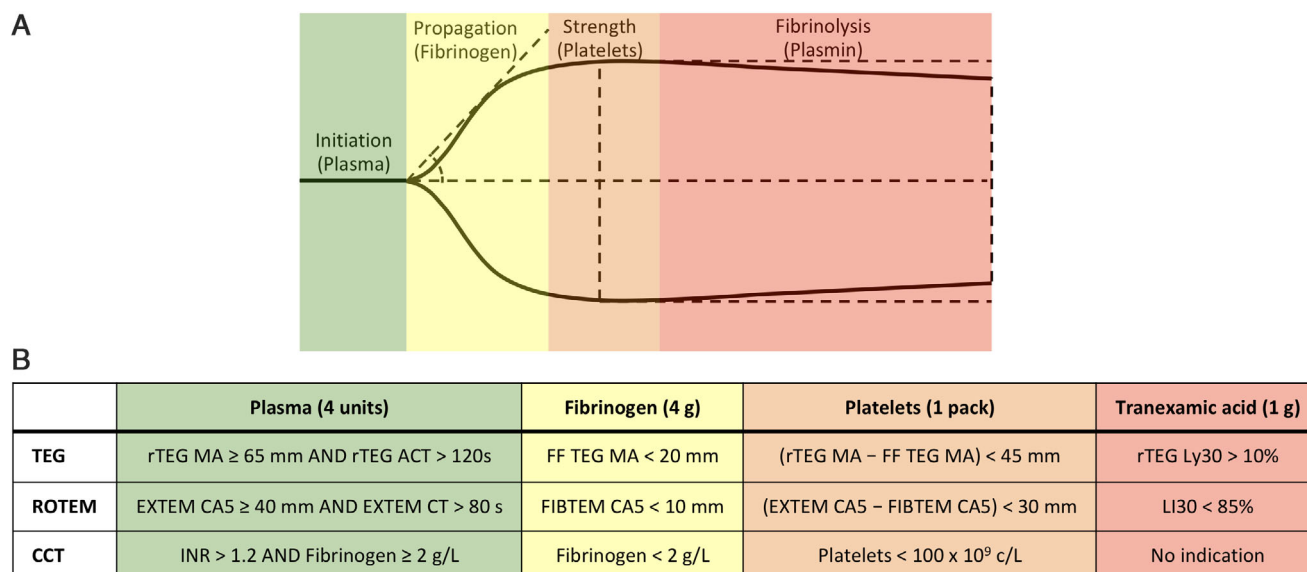


FIGURE 2 Data-driven thresholds for additional component replacement in trauma resuscitation. A, colored-coded schematic of a normal VEM tracing indicating the four phases of clot dynamics measured by TEG and ROTEM platforms with principal biologic component responsible for the measured activity indicated. B, table adapted from Baksaas-Aasen et al with thresholds for additional component resuscitation based on VEM and CCT. Additional component quantity to be administered is indicated in parentheses. rTEG, rapid TEG; MA, maximal amplitude; ACT, activated clotting time; EXTEM, extrinsic ROTEM; CA5, clot amplitude at 5 minutes; CT, clotting time; INR, international normalized ratio; FF TEG, functional fibrinogen TEG; FIBTEM, fibrin-based ROTEM; Ly30, lysis fraction at 30 minutes; LI30, unlysed fraction at 30 minutes

thrombocytopenia (Figure 2). Increasing evidence also suggests that abnormalities early in TEG and ROTEM assays can reliably predict need for transfusion.^{84,88–91} A side-by-side comparison of TEG and ROTEM in 182 severely-injured civilian trauma patients demonstrated that early changes in rTEG and EXTEM both differentiated INR cut-off of 1.2 and could predict need for increasing transfusion.⁹⁰ As part of the iTACTIC algorithm development, TEG parameters selected as thresholds for plasma administration are TEG: rTEG MA ≥ 65 mm AND rTEG ACT > 120 seconds (ACT is the rapid TEG assay equivalent to R time) and ROTEM: EXTEM CA5 ≥ 40 mm AND EXTEM CT > 80 seconds.⁸⁷

2.1.2 | Fibrinogen concentration and fibrinolysis

Fibrinogen conversion to fibrin is instrumental in clot formation, and low fibrinogen levels (< 150 mg/dL) are frequently found in severely injured patients.⁹² Relatively limited investigation has been undertaken with relation to VEM and fibrinogen levels, in part due to the ability of the gold standard Clauss method to detect hypofibrinogenemia.⁹³ Nevertheless, like CCTs, the Clauss method is time consuming and fibrinogen specific TEG and ROTEM assays have been developed. Functional

Fibrinogen TEG (FF TEG) is a TEG assay activated by lyophilized tissue factor in the presence of platelet inhibitor Abciximab. FF TEG MA < 14.9 mm has been shown to correlate with low fibrinogen in injured adults.⁹⁴ FIBTEM is a ROTEM assay activated by tissue factor in presence of platelet inhibitor cytochalasin D; thresholds of MCF < 10 mm⁹⁴ and CA5 < 9.5 mm⁹⁵ have been used to identify fibrinogen deficiency in bleeding trauma patients. Multiple FF TEG and rTEG parameters have been shown to correlate with transfusion requirement and mortality.⁹⁶ As part of the iTACTIC algorithm development, the hypofibrinogenemia threshold identified for fibrinogen administration for TEG is FF TEG MA < 20 mm and for ROTEM is FIBTEM CA5 < 10 mm.⁸⁷

Fibrinolysis balances fibrin deposition and clot formation in normal hemostasis. Hyperfibrinolysis occurs in up to two-thirds of severely-injured trauma patients.^{97,98} Currently, the only specific recommended treatment for hyperfibrinolysis is empiric administration of the antifibrinolytic tranexamic acid (TXA)¹³ within 3 hours of injury⁹⁹ based on both military and civilian studies that demonstrate reduced bleeding and overall mortality in trauma patients.^{100–103} The gold standard assay of hyperfibrinolysis, euglobulin lysis time,^{104,105} suffers from limited availability in standard hospital laboratories and even more pronounced time delays relative to CCTs in that results take approximately 4 hours to process.¹⁰⁶

Although conventional ROTEM is relatively insensitive to detection of moderate hyperfibrinolysis in comparison to detection of plasmin-antiplasmin complexes,⁹⁸ multiple EXTEM thresholds including $CA10 \leq 10$ mm, $CA15 \leq 15$ mm, $MCF \leq 18$ mm, and $LI30 \leq 71\%$ can accurately diagnose hyperfibrinolysis when compared to euglobulin lysis.¹⁰⁷ Rapid TEG Ly30 cutoffs from $>3\%$ ^{47,108,109} to $>15\%$ ⁹⁷ are able to identify post-traumatic fibrinolysis and are associated with increased risk of mortality. As part of the iTACTIC algorithm development, the hyperfibrinolysis threshold identified for additional TXA administration based on TEG is rTEG Ly30 $> 10\%$ and for ROTEM is EXTEM LI30 $< 85\%$.⁸⁷

Fibrinolysis shutdown (FSD), on the other end of the spectrum, is defined by $Ly30 \leq 0.8\%$ or maximum lysis $< 3.5\%$.¹¹⁰ This phenomenon is associated with poor patient outcomes in both children and adults, including death and disability.^{111–114} The term likely encompasses multiple phenotypes of abnormal hemostasis: primary fibrinolysis resistance and delayed consumptive coagulopathy resulting in lack of fibrinolysis both have been proposed as mechanisms of this pathology,¹¹⁵ although the existence of FSD as a unique manifestation has been challenged recently.¹¹⁶ There are currently no recommended therapies beyond supportive care for FSD; however, clinical trials are underway evaluating the use of aspirin and statins in non-head injured patients to reduce lung injury and VTE complications in patients with FSD (NCT02901067).

2.1.3 | Platelet dysfunction

Platelets contribute to secondary hemostasis through thrombin generation and stabilization of the developing fibrin clot. Platelet mapping based on VEM was developed to assess platelet response to the agonists ADP and arachidonic acid (AA). Failure to respond to agonist introduction into the assay as measured by MA of clot generated is interpreted as percent inhibition of platelet receptor activity for that agonist.¹¹⁷ These assays correlate well with the gold-standard assays for platelet function, impedance and light transmission aggregometry.^{118,119} In severely injured trauma patients, platelet response to ADP and AA is severely impaired compared to healthy controls with ADP response inhibited 86% vs 4% and AA response inhibited 45% vs 0.5%, respectively. Poor response to ADP predicts need for platelet transfusion and poor response to AA predicts need for red blood cell transfusion.¹²⁰ As part of the iTACTIC algorithm development, the platelet dysfunction threshold for additional platelet transfusion is not based on platelet mapping but

is defined based on differences in extrinsic assays and fibrin assays to eliminate the fibrin component that interacts with platelet function. For TEG assay, suggested criteria for platelet administration is defined as $(rTEG\ MA - FF\ TEG\ MA) < 45$ mm and for ROTEM is defined as $(EXTEM\ CA5 - FIBTEM\ CA5) < 30$ mm.⁸⁷ Overall, however, virtually every ex vivo assay of platelet function is challenged by a lack of strong clinical correlation. It is unclear if the response to agonists such as ADP or AA (whether as part of VEM or aggregometry) accurately reflects endogenous platelet (dys)function in trauma.^{52,121} This is an active and important area of research in TIC.

2.2 | VEM-directed transfusion strategies

Below, we provide a summary of previously published TEG (Table 3) and ROTEM (Table 4) directed transfusion strategies. In general, smaller cohorts have been used to derive TEG,¹²² rTEG,¹²³ citrated kaolin (CK) TEG,¹²⁴ and adult¹²⁵ and pediatric¹²⁶ EXTEM optimized thresholds for resuscitation. The remaining publications describe retrospective or prospective cohort studies, and the abundance of transfusion triggers for both TEG^{39,60,70,127–136} and ROTEM^{137–146} platforms are derived from expert opinion rather than data-driven thresholds. Regarding outcomes, only one randomized controlled trial comparing VEM to CCT-directed resuscitation has been published to date.⁶⁰ In this single institution study, the authors were able to demonstrate improved survival, reduced FFP transfusion, and reduced platelet transfusion in patients receiving VEM-directed resuscitation.⁶⁰ Results of the iTACTIC trial, the first multi-national randomized control trial based on data-driven transfusion triggers to assess VEM-directed resuscitation in comparison to CCT-based resuscitation, are currently pending publication.⁸⁶

Whereas early protocols focused on basic TEG and ROTEM assays (eg, TEG, rTEG, EXTEM) and identified single variable thresholds as transfusion triggers across resuscitative components, more recent protocols have attempted to isolate specific clotting factor contributions to guide resuscitation through more complex comparisons. For example, plasma resuscitation is triggered in the iTACTIC protocol based on delayed clot initiation (rTEG ACT, EXTEM CT) but only if a high clot amplitude is achieved (rTEG MA, EXTEM CA5) suggesting normal fibrinogen deposition.⁸⁷ Although somewhat more complex, these algorithms will hopefully achieve optimization of sensitivity and specificity to accurately identify the need for component resuscitation for individual patients.

TABLE 3 TEG guided resuscitation algorithms

Assay(s)	Clot initiation		Clot propagation		Clot strength		Fibrinolysis		References
	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	
TEG									
TEG	R > 8	Consider FFP	K > 4 α < 47	Consider Cryo	MA < 54	Consider DDAVP or Plt	Ly30 > 8%	Consider antifibrinolytic	Walsh ¹²⁹
TEG	R = 7-10	FFP 1 U (4 mL/kg)	α < 45	Cryo	MA = 48-54	DDAVP 0.3 mcg/kg	EPL ≥ 7.5%	Fibrinolytic of choice	Tapia ¹³⁰
	R = 11-14	FFP 2 U (8 mL/kg)		0.6 U/kg	MA = 41-48	Plt 5 U			
	R > 14	FFP 4 U (16 mL/kg)			MA ≤ 40	Plt 10 U			
TEG	R > 8	FFP	α < 60	Cryo after FFP	MA < 55	Plt or rFVIIa	—	—	Yao ¹³¹
TEG	R > 10	FFP 2 U	α < 53 κ > 3	Cryo 1 U	MA < 50	Plt 1 U	Ly30 > 3%	TXA	Unruh ¹²²
rTEG									
rTEG	ACT > 110	Consider FFP	α < 66	Consider Cryo	MA < 54	DDAVP +/- Plt	—	—	Kashuk ¹³²
rTEG	ACT > 128	FFP and pRBC	α < 56	Cryo/Fbg/Plt	MA < 55	Cryo/Fbg/Plt	Ly30 > 3%	TXA	Holcomb ¹³³
	R > 1.1		K > 2.5	Cryo/Fbg/FFP					
rTEG	ACT > 110	FFP	α < 60	Cryo	MA < 50	Plt	EPL > 15%	Consider aminocaproic acid	Pezold ¹³⁴
rTEG	ACT > 110	FFP 2 U	α < 63	Consider Cryo	MA < 55	Consider Plt	—	—	Sawyer ^{135,136}
rTEG	ACT > 110	FFP 2 U	α < 60	Cryo 10 U	MA < 54	Plt 1 U	Ly30 ≥ 3%	TXA 1 g	Mauffrey ¹²⁷
rTEG	ACT > 128	FFP 2 U	α < 65	Cryo 10 U	MA < 55	Plt 1 U	Ly30 ≥ 5%	TXA 1 g	Gonzalez ⁶⁰
rTEG	ACT ≥ 140	2 FFP, 10 cryo, 1 plt	α < 63	Cryo 10 U	MA < 55	Plt 1 U	Ly30 ≥ 3%	TXA 1 g	Gonzalez ⁶⁰
	ACT 111-139	2 FFP							
	ACT ≤ 110	2 FFP							
rTEG	ACT > 128	FFP	α < 65	Cryo	MA < 55	Plt	Ly30 > 5%	TXA	Einersen ¹²³
rTEG (peds)	ACT > 125	FFP 20 mL/kg	K > 3 α < 55	Cryo 1 U/10 kg	MA < 51	Plt 15 mL/kg	Ly30 > 3%	Consider TXA	Leeper ⁷⁰
CK-TEG									
CK TEG	R > 4.45	Plasma	α < 67	Cryo	MA < 60	Plt	Ly30 > 4.55%	TXA	Stettler ¹²⁴
Multiple assays									
TEG	R = 10-14 R > 14	FFP 10-20 mL/kg FFP 30 mL/kg	α < 52	FFP 20-30 mL/kg	—	—	—	—	Johansson ³⁹
FF TEG	—	—	—	—	MA < 14	FFP 20-30 mL/kg OR Cryo 3-5 mL/kg OR Fbg 1-2 g	—	—	

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Assay(s)	Clot initiation		Clot propagation		Clot strength		Fibrinolysis		References
	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	
CK TEG	—	—	—	—	MA = 45-49 MA < 45	Plt 1 U or 5 mL/kg Plt 2 U or 10 mL/kg	Ly30 > 8% If no ↑ α or ↑ MA	TXA 1-2 g	
Hep TEG	R > 3 different from TEG	Protamine 50-100 mg OR FFP 10-20 mL/kg	—	—	—	—	—	—	
TEG	R = 10-14 R > 14	FFP 20 mL/kg FFP 30 mL/kg	—	—	MA 45-49 & FF MA > 14 MA < 45 & FF MA > 14	Plt 5 mL/kg Plt 10 mL/kg	Ly30 > 8%	TXA 1-2 g or 10-20 mg/kg	Stensballe ^{1,28}
FF TEG	—	—	MA = 7-14 MA < 7	FFP 20 mL/kg OR Cryo 3 mL/kg OR Fbg 20 mg/kg FFP 30 mL/kg OR Cryo 5 mL/kg OR Fbg 30 mg/kg	—	—	—	—	
Hep TEG	R > 2 different from TEG	Protamine 50-100 mg OR FFP 10-20 mL/kg	—	—	—	—	—	—	
rTEG	ACT > 120 AND MA ≥ 65	Plasma 4 U	—	—	—	—	Ly30 > 10%	TXA 1 g	Baksaas-Aasen ⁸⁷
FF TEG	—	—	MA < 20	Fbg 4 g (Cryo or concentrate)	(rTEG MA) - (FF TEG MA) < 45	Plt 1 U	—	—	

Abbreviations: ACT, activated clotting time; CK TEG, citrated kaolin TEG; Cryo, cryoprecipitate; DDAVP, desmopressin; EPL, estimated percent lysis; Fbg, fibrinogen; FF TEG, functional fibrinogen TEG; FFP, fresh frozen plasma; Hep TEG, heparinase TEG; K, time to standard clot firmness; Ly30, lysis fraction at 30 min; MA, maximal amplitude; Plt, platelets; pRBC, packed red blood cells; R, reaction time; rFVIIa, recombinant factor VIIa; rTEG, rapid TEG; TEG, thromboelastography; TXA, tranexamic acid; α , slope between R and K.

TABLE 4 ROTEM guided resuscitation algorithms

Assay(s)	Clot initiation		Clot propagation		Clot strength		Fibrinolysis		References
	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	
EXTEM									
EXTEM	CT = 81-100	PCC 500-600 U	MCF < 50 & FIBTEM	Fbg to FIBTEM	MCF < 50 & FIBTEM MCF ≥10	Plt	"Pathologic" with normal APTEM	TXA 20 mg/kg	Durlila ¹³⁷
	CT = 101-120	PCC 1000-1200 U	MCF < 10	ΔMCF x 6.25 mg/kg					
	CT > 120	PCC 1500-1800 U							
EXTEM	CT > 78.5	Plasma	α < 64.5	Cryo	CA10 < 40.5	Plt	LI60 < 74%	TXA	Stettler ¹²⁵
EXTEM	CT > 84.5	Plasma	CA10 < 43.5	Cryo or Fbg	MCF < 64.5	Plt	—	—	Cunningham ¹²⁶
(peds)									
Multiple assays									
INTEM	INTEM CT > HEPTTEM CT	Protamine 1-2 k U	—	—	—	—	—	—	Schochl ¹³⁸⁻¹⁴²
EXTEM	CT = 81-100	PCC 500-600 U	CA10 < 30	Fbg 6-8 g &	CA10 < 40 & FIBTEM CA10 > 12	Plt	ML > 15% & APTEM ML > 15%	Consider FXIII 1250 U	Schlimp ¹⁴³
	CT = 101-120	PCC 1000-1200 U		TXA 15-20 mg/kg&					
	CT > 120	PCC 1500-1800 U		Plt 2 U & (PCC 20-30 U/kg OR FFP 30 mL/kg)					
FIBTEM	—	—	CA10 ≤ 3	Fbg 6 g	—	—	—	—	Tanaka ¹⁴⁴
	CT > 240	FFP 10-15 mL/kg OR PCC 20 IU/kg Protamine 25-50 mg	CA10 = 4-6	Fbg 3-4 g	—	—	—	—	
EXTEM	(INTEM CT)/ (HEPTTEM CT) > 1.0								
	CT > 100	FFP 10-15 mL/kg OR PCC 20 IU/kg	MCF < 45 & FIBTEM MCF < 10	Cryo/Fbg + Plt 1 U	MCF < 35 & FIBTEM MCF ≥10	Plt 1-2 U	-	-	
			MCF > 45 & FIBTEM MCF < 10	Cryo/Fbg	MCF = 35-45 & FIBTEM MCF ≥10	Plt 1 U			
FIBTEM	—	—	CA10 < 8	Cryo 10 U OR	—	—	"Fibrinolysis pattern"	TXA 1-2 g	Stensballe ¹²⁸
			CA10 < 5	Fbg 2 g				OR aminocaproic acid 5-10 g	
				Cryo 20 U OR Fbg 4 g					
INTEM	CT 200-240	FFP 20 mL/kg	—	—	—	—	—	—	
EXTEM	CT > 240	FFP 30 mL/kg	—	—	CA10 35-42 & FIBTEM CA10 ≥ 10	Plt 5 mL/kg	LI30 < 94%	TXA 1-2 g or 10-20 mg	
	CT 80-100	FFP 20 mL/kg			OR MCF < 50 & FIBTEM MCF ≥10				
	CT > 100	FFP 30 mL/kg			CA10 < 35 & FIBTEM CA10 ≥ 10	Plt 10 mL/kg			
FIBTEM	—	—	MCF = 6-9	FFP 20 mL/kg OR Cryo 3 mL/kg OR Fbg 20 mg/kg	—	—	—	—	
			MCF < 6	FFP 30 mL/kg OR Cryo 5 mL/kg OR Fbg 30 mg/kg					

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Clot initiation			Clot propagation		Clot strength		Fibrinolysis		References	
Assay(s)	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment	Threshold	Treatment		
HEPTEM	(INTEM CT)/ (HEPTEM CT) > 1.25	Protamine 50-100 mg OR FFP 10-20 mL/kg	—	—	—	—	—	—	Deng ¹⁴⁵	
EXTEM (peds)	CT > 90 OR INR > 1.5	PCC 25 U/kg OR FFP	—	—	—	—	—	—		
FIBTEM (peds)	—	—	MCF < 7	Fbg 25-50 mg/kg	MCF ≤10-12 OR Plt < 50 × 10 ⁹ c/L	Plt	—	—		
INTEM	CT > 240 & (INTEM CT/ HEPTEM CT) ≥ 1.25 OR CT > 240 & (INTEM CT/ HEPTEM CT) < 1.25	Protamine 0.5 mg/kg FFP 10 mL/kg	—	—	—	—	—	—		Gorlinger ¹⁴⁶
EXTEM	CT > 80 & FIBTEM A5 ≥ 9	4F-PCC 15-25 IU/kg OR FFP 10-15 mL/kg	CA5 < 35 & FIBTEM CA5 < 9	Fbg or Cryo To target FIBTEM A5 ≥ 12	CA5 < 35 & FIBTEM CA5 ≥ 9 OR CA5 < 35 & TRAPTEM <50 or ADPTEM <40	Plt 5-10 mL/ kg	CA5 < 35	TXA 15-25 mg/kg		
FIBTEM	—	—	—	—	—	—	CT > 600	TXA 15-25 mg/kg		
Undefined	—	—	—	—	—	—	ML ≥5%	TXA 15-25 mg/kg		
EXTEM	CA5 ≥ 40 & CT > 80	Plasma 4 U	—	—	—	—	LI30 < 85%	TXA 1 g	Baksaas- Aasen ⁸⁷	
FIBTEM	—	—	CA5 < 10	Fbg 4 g (Cryo or concentrate)	(EXTEM CA5) - (FIBTEM CA5) < 30	Plt 1 U	—	—		

Abbreviations: ADPTEM, ADP platelet aggregometry ROTEM; Alt, alternatively; APTEM, aprotinin ROTEM; CA10, clot amplitude at 10 min; CA5, clot amplitude at 5 min; Cryo, cryoprecipitate; CT, clotting time; EXTEM, extrinsic ROTEM; FFP, fresh frozen plasma; FIBTEM, fibrin-based ROTEM; FXIII, factor XIII; HEPTTEM, heparinase ROTEM; INNTEM, intrinsic ROTEM; IU, international units; LI30, unlysed fraction at 30 min; LI60, unlysed fraction at 60 min; MCF, maximal clot firmness; ML, maximal lysis; PCC, prothrombin complex concentrate; Plt, platelets; TRAPTEM, thrombin activating peptide ROTEM; TXA, tranexamic acid; α , slope between CT and MCF.

2.3 | Hypercoagulability

Thromboembolic events are common in injured adults with incidence up to 58% depending upon method of detection and study design.^{147–150} In line with this concern, application of VEM platforms to identify hypercoagulable trauma patients has been undertaken.^{108,151–155} Elevated TEG MA on admission has been correlated with increased incidence of pulmonary embolism in a retrospective observational study.¹⁵¹ TEG MA greater than 65 mm was found to independently predict pulmonary embolism with direct correlation between further increases in MA and risk of such an event in a prospective study,¹⁵² and similar correlation has been noted prospectively for elevated TEG MA and risk of venous thromboembolism (VTE) and pulmonary embolism (PE) in extremity trauma.¹⁵³ The shear elastic modulus (G) is indicative of clot strength, and elevations in this parameter have also been correlated with increased thromboembolic events in blunt abdominal trauma.¹⁵⁴ These data are generally limited by their observational nature but support the idea that VEM parameters may predict clinically significant sequelae of hypercoagulability.

In injured children, risk of VTE in general is substantially lower than in adults, though high risk populations include those with traumatic brain injury and bimodal age distribution (age < 3 years and age > 13 years).^{108,155} A TEG MA ≥ 65 mm is found in approximately one third of all pediatric trauma patients, though an association of admission TEG MA with future VTE has not been established. In contrast, admission FSD ($LY30 \leq 0.8\%$) is common and has been associated with subsequent development of deep vein thrombosis.¹¹⁴

Based on these findings, thromboprophylaxis is strongly recommended in adult trauma patients; however, VEM measures of hypercoagulability remain abnormal in spite of such treatment.¹⁵⁶ These findings beg the question of whether current thromboprophylaxis in trauma is adequate. Alternatively, abnormal VEM may be of limited clinical utility in assessing thromboprophylaxis efficacy. Future studies are needed to investigate whether VEM-directed thromboprophylaxis protocols may be superior to, or capable of adequately monitoring, current standard dose regimens for VTE prevention.

2.4 | Role in patients taking antiplatelet/anticoagulation

A major challenge in caring for trauma patients is frequent lack of past medical history including knowledge of antiplatelet and/or anticoagulant therapy history. VEM, including TEG ADP and AA response platelet

mapping, has been investigated as a means of evaluating pre-injury antiplatelet administration. In these studies, specificity is poor,¹⁵⁷ the range of values identified as indicative of control vs drug groups overlap,¹⁵⁸ source of platelet dysfunction is difficult to differentiate from trauma-mediated dysfunction,¹⁵⁹ and performance relative to alternatives such as aggregometry is poor.^{160,161} Thus, no evidence is available to support TEG or ROTEM use in detecting antiplatelet therapy at present.¹⁶² Detection of warfarin and novel oral anticoagulants (NOACs) is similarly unreliable, due to the fact that the test is run with added reagents that mask the presence of an anticoagulant.^{163–165} Titrated NOAC added to blood samples *ex vivo* can be used to develop a standard curve for VEM assays,¹⁶⁶ and in other studies, well defined cohorts of patients taking a single drug had blood collected at a prescribed interval post-administration with effective differentiation of drug vs placebo.^{167–169} Unfortunately, these experiments are limited by the homogeneity of samples assessed and development of real-world thresholds in the setting of trauma with variable renal function and unknown dose administration time, agent, etc. prevents robust discrimination of presence of NOACs. Thus, direct measurement of drug concentrations remains the gold standard test for detection of anticoagulants, and application of VEM in this clinical context is not recommended.^{170,171}

2.5 | Pediatric trauma

Injury represents a growing public health epidemic and is the number one cause of mortality in young adults and children over the age of one. Children who are undertreated and undertriaged have worse outcomes compared to those who receive timely and appropriate care after injury.^{172,173} As in adults, resuscitative strategies in children emphasize bleeding cessation, damage control hemostatic resuscitation and prevention/mitigation of TIC. Importantly, permissive hypotension is not a recommended strategy in pediatric trauma. Children have the physiologic reserve to maintain normotension to the verge of circulatory collapse; hypotension is a sign that a child is in extremis and should be treated with aggressive resuscitation.

As is true for many fields of research, data on use of VEM in pediatric trauma is limited in comparison to adults.¹⁷⁴ Although significant concordance in findings has been published as discussed throughout this review, pediatric trauma differs substantially from adult trauma in many respects. Crucially, the incidence of traumatic brain injury is high, hemorrhagic shock and penetrating mechanism is less prevalent, and child abuse represents a

unique and complex mechanism that includes anoxic injury, blunt force, shearing force from shaking, and spinal cord injury from whiplash.¹⁷⁵ Although overlapping mechanisms of TIC may be at play,^{46,47,114,176,177} normal values for laboratory studies developed in adults may not align exactly with reference range values amongst pediatric controls.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, dysregulation of clot strength, fibrinolysis, and clotting factors have been associated with increased mortality, increased thromboembolic events, and increased transfusion requirements/mortality, respectively.¹⁷⁸

Few protocols for VEM-directed resuscitation have been developed specifically for pediatric patients.^{70,126,145} Many pediatric trauma centers rely on adult ranges or do not utilize VEM-guided resuscitation due to lack of pediatric-specific data, lack of familiarity with interpretation of tests and/or lack of appropriate laboratory resources to run VEM assays. Nevertheless, decreased blood product administration and more rapid recovery of coagulopathic profiles in pediatric patients managed with a ROTEM-directed transfusion strategy has been demonstrated.¹⁴⁵ We are not aware of any ongoing clinical trials investigating use of VEM in pediatric populations with exception of monitoring outcomes in treatment with fibrinogen vs cryoprecipitate (FEISTY Jnr NCT03508141). iTACTIC inclusion criteria, similar to many studies surrounding TIC/VEM, are limited to individuals 16 years or older.

3 | CONCLUSION

3.1 | Pitfalls

Caution must be exercised in depending upon VEM for trauma resuscitation without appropriate context. The clinician should recall that these assays are *ex vivo* analyses of dynamic *in vivo* systems. TEG and ROTEM assays are limited to assessment of secondary hemostasis only, and neither provides information on vascular or primary hemostatic mechanisms. Failure of VEM to identify primary disorders of hemostasis, for example von Willebrand disorder, highlights this limitation.¹⁷⁹ Original descriptions of trauma's "bloody vicious cycle" identified three components to the lethal triad: coagulopathy, hypothermia, and acidosis.¹⁸⁰ VEM assays are conducted under ideal laboratory settings in the absence of these factors, which are commonly seen after injury and may contribute to vastly different coagulation profiles in the patient as compared with the test tube.

As discussed above, pharmacologic disruptions of coagulation including antiplatelet and anticoagulant therapies cannot be accurately evaluated by VEM.^{159,162–165}

An aging trauma patient population presents with diverse and often unknown exposures including these and other pharmacologic modulators. Further, ROTEM measurements may be affected by ethanol¹⁸¹ and TEG results may not correlate reliably with CCTs or patient outcomes in the intoxicated trauma patient,^{182,183} thus significant care must be taken when interpreting VEM in intoxicated trauma patients. Effects of additional recreational/medical therapies are as yet unknown.

In addition to environmental factors and ethanol, sex and age also contribute to discrepancies in coagulation profiles. Recent work has demonstrated a mortality impact of sex differences in coagulation profiles with females demonstrating a more hypercoagulable profile and survival benefit in the setting of depressed clot strength.¹⁸⁴ As discussed above, investigations of VEM in pediatric patients are relatively limited in comparison to adults; extrapolating findings from adult studies to the care of pediatric trauma patients should be done with caution. At the other extreme of age, traumatic coagulopathy may be less frequent in elderly patients.¹⁸⁵ Elderly patients present with more comorbid conditions and higher incidence of polypharmacy, and clinical indicators that may prompt resuscitation in younger patients are frequently altered in geriatric trauma patients.¹⁸⁶ These differences may alter resuscitation in general, and must be considered carefully given that baseline VEM parameters may be different in healthy elderly volunteers relative to younger adult controls.¹⁸⁷

3.2 | Benefits

In spite of these limitations, VEM assays have a growing role in the care of the trauma patient. VEM assays have utility in prognostication, as any abnormal coagulation profile, whether hypocoagulable, hypercoagulable, or mixed, has been associated consistently with increased mortality and morbidity in trauma patients.¹⁰⁹ Regarding resuscitation practice, the singular prospective randomized control trial published to date demonstrated improved mortality when resuscitation was guided by VEM as compared to CCT.⁶⁰ This study was limited by constraints on turn-around time of CCTs, and others have argued that clinicians unconstrained by the limits of clinical trials perform equally effectively to those guided by VEM.¹⁸⁸ Meta-analyses have come to similar conclusions, but have also demonstrated decreased transfusion of unnecessary products.^{85,189} These changes are likely dependent upon local practice as other studies have demonstrated increased blood product administration¹³³; however, standardization of thresholds^{86,87} may alter these findings. Cost-effectiveness¹⁹⁰ and shorter length of stay¹⁹¹ have also been demonstrated.

3.3 | Future directions

VEM assays appear to be particularly adept in differentiating injury-related fibrinolysis phenotypes and directing treatment related to these differences.^{93,192,193} ROTEM can detect treatment with and response to fibrinogen, plasma, platelets, and TXA in critically injured trauma patients.¹⁹⁴ Recent work suggests that clinically-relevant parameters may be estimated earlier in the course of TEG assay processing thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of resuscitation needs.¹⁹⁵ Device development to improve reliability, repeatability, and ease of data generation continues to improve potential for widespread application.⁷⁷ As point of care testing develops and utilization becomes more widespread, our understanding of application to trauma resuscitation is likely to grow. Such technology may facilitate earlier guidance of hemostatic resuscitation including during patient transport and in austere environments such as combat zones that would otherwise be unable to achieve the necessary laboratory settings for accurate VEM.

Currently, 12 clinical trials are recruiting or pending initiation for use of VEM in trauma. These tests span the spectrum of interventions from guidance of resuscitation using ROTEM in TBI (THROMBIN NCT03616808) to comparison of devices (ROTCLLOT NCT04107818, VISCOTRAUMA NCT03380676, STAT NCT02901067, STAR NCT03780894) to identification of physiologic derangements (ROTATE IT NCT03765866, NCT03730415, TrICI NCT03128658) and others (FEISTY Jnr NCT03508141, NCT04165538, PRETIC NCT03780894). These trials will contribute to the growing body of literature advancing the field of hemostatic resuscitation in critically injured patients.

Concepts in trauma resuscitation are rapidly evolving, and VEM technologies are poised to facilitate change. From the direction of component provision in a dynamic hemostatic resuscitation to the broader understanding of patient physiology after injury, VEM provides rapid and detailed information to guide and improve care of the trauma patient.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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