Reading trauma research for a case discussion

Turn a paper into a precise clinical question.

EVIDENCE & DISCUSSION / ADULT TRAUMA

Judge what the study can support before deciding whether its findings should change practice.

01 Define the question

Identify the population, intervention or exposure, comparator, outcome and follow-up. Ask whether the clinical setting and patients resemble the case under discussion. Separate an exploratory question from a prespecified primary outcome.

02 Check the comparison

For trials, examine randomisation, allocation, attrition and analysis groups. For observational studies, ask why treatments differed: physiology, timing, frailty or injury severity may confound an apparent treatment effect.

03 Read size & uncertainty

Consider absolute effects, confidence intervals, harms and patient-important outcomes. Statistical significance alone does not establish clinical importance; a non-significant result does not demonstrate equivalence.

04 State a usable conclusion

Separate findings from interpretation. Name the key limitation and what additional evidence is needed. Reporting checklists such as CONSORT help identify missing information; they are not stand-alone quality scores.

WATCH POINT When two groups differ in both surgical technique and timing, the outcome cannot confidently be attributed to technique alone.

DISCUSS WITH THE TEAM

What is the strongest defensible conclusion, and what would be an overclaim?

READ THE SOURCES

[1] CONSORT 2025: reporting randomised trials, statement and checklist.