

Research needed on approaches to prevent attacks on health care during armed conflict

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Deliberate attacks on patients, hospitals, and clinics during armed conflict are atrocious acts, state the *PLOS Medicine* editors writing in an editorial in this week's PLOS Medicine, and call for more research on the practical approaches to preventing such attacks, as well as studies that evaluate interventions to improve health care in conflict settings.

Adding further to the destruction and chaos of conflict, the past few years have brought mounting concern over the deliberate attacks on [health care facilities](#) and health workers, perpetrated to cause maximum damage to the health of populations.

Despite several recent international initiatives and conferences, attacks on health care during [armed conflict](#) have increased, according to the editors, citing information from a recent report from Human Rights Watch and the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, which documents specific examples from 18 countries.

The editors say: "With such concerted activity attempting to tackle the egregious acts of attacks on [health care](#), it is disappointing to note the distinct lack of progress in reducing the number of such attacks."

The editors support the need for better data collection on these attacks but argue: "While of course improved data collection on the number and nature of the attacks is important, practical action is also necessary to help improve the health outcomes of people terrorised, harmed, and displaced by such attacks."

They continue: "The *PLOS Medicine* editors welcome the research, debate, and discussion on how such practical measures can be implemented."

More information: The PLOS Medicine Editors (2014) Health Care in Danger: Deliberate Attacks on Health Care during Armed Conflict. *PLOS Med* 11(6): e1001668. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1001668](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001668)

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