The R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center (STC) is the primary adult resource center for trauma in Maryland. STC admitted almost 8,300 patients in fiscal year 2013. Motor vehicle crashes (MVC) were the leading cause of admission. In 2011, STC created the Center for Injury Prevention and Policy (CIPP). The CIPP is a multidisciplinary team focused on injury trends and developing education programs in the state of Maryland. The mission of the CIPP is “To reduce preventable injuries, violence and reduce the consequences while establishing a culture of injury prevention in Maryland.”

The CIPP collaborated with a group of staff nurses and other disciplines in May 2012 to create a Trauma Prevention Nursing Council. Each of the eight STC Nursing Units has a designated nurse representative that meets monthly with the CIPP team to discuss upcoming events and projects. The nursing representatives are also responsible for recruiting additional volunteers from their unit to assist with the prevention programs in the community. The nurses are compensated with 4 hours pay each month for all programs taught.

The Nursing Council works with the CIPP’S Injury Prevention Coordinator (IPC) to facilitate, plan and implement trauma prevention programs throughout the state. The outreach programs allow STC nurses opportunities to provide primary prevention initiatives via educational programs in the community. One of such initiatives is the use of high school forums in trauma education, with a primary focus on impaired and distracted driving. The IPC mentors new volunteers prior to presenting alone, to maintain consistency.

One of the goals of the Nursing Council and the CIPP is to reduce the number of motor vehicle crash admissions to the STC. At the beginning of each school year, the CIPP contacts all high schools in the state to offer the Trauma Prevention Educational Programs. Schools that choose to participate, host an assembly. A Nursing Council Member or volunteer presents an hour long presentation on the consequences of impaired or distracted driving. The hour long presentation includes a slide show, a 10 minute home-grown video unique to this program on either distracted or impaired driving. Following the slide and video presentation, the Nursing Council representative engages the students in discussion around smart decision making. The presentation is then augmented by a young trauma survivor who shares his/her powerful story. The Nursing Council and the CIPP conducted 53 high school programs that reached 11,931 teens in fiscal year 2014.

Effectiveness of the program is determined through students’ self-report, surveys and testimonies from students and school officials, stating a decrease in high risk behaviors after the school assemblies. The team plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the school program by measuring changes in attitude and perception of risk, before and after the assemblies. Results will be used to improve program content.

In an effort to combat preventable injury; other trauma centers may benefit from this program by implementing a Trauma Prevention Nursing Council, to assist their trauma centers in reducing the number of MVC related admissions. It will also allow nurses to provide primary prevention in their communities.