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## HOW DID CRISONCALL BEGIN?

**CrisisOnCall** started business operations on 1 October 2002. It is also on this day that **Europ Assistance SA**, the company that manages some of the services of **CrisisOnCall**, came into existence. **Europ Assistance SA** started through the amalgamation of the companies Care Assist, MRI/CritiCare and Europ Assistance that was part of the Netcare group. Europ Assistance is an international company that has been in operation since 1963 and currently does business in 38 countries.

In the late nineties a team of trauma personnel got together to discuss the problem, especially experienced by paramedics, of the timeous availability of medical information of a patient in an emergency situation. The case study used was that of Cornelia Raath. She was involved in a motorcycle accident on 1 May 1996 and was turned away by two private hospitals because paramedics could not provide proof of membership to a medical aid (read her story on [www.miaauw.co.za](http://www.miaauw.co.za)).

It was decided at this meeting to appoint an advisory board under chairmanship of Marius Vermaak (now Director: Marketing of **CrisisOnCall**).

This advisory board conducted a thorough investigation at a national level and the following shocking facts, among others, came to light:

- (a) Due to the impact and circumstances of the accident, medical aid cards and information sometimes become separated from the patient.
- (b) Onlookers rob patients and take their purses/handbags containing their medical aid cards.
- (c) Information in connection with allergies and relatives contact details, are in many instances, not readily available at the scene of the accident.
- (d) Paramedics sometimes have to fight for a patient's life and do not have the time to search for information.
- (e) Metal bracelets containing medical information are stolen or break off during an accident, thereby cutting off the life-artery of the patient.
- (f) Occasionally similar incidents can occur at home.

This study played a pertinent role in development of the **CrisisOnCall** identification system and the founding of the company.

In their programme "**Your card or your life**" that was screened by **CARTE Blanche** on 9 November 2003, they concluded: "*What happens if you require medical treatment? Can your medical aid speak for you when you cannot? **Carte Blanche discovers that in some cases the absence of a medical aid card or information may mean that you forfeit your life.***"

Carte Blanche confirmed in this programme the study that lead to the inception of **CrisisOnCall**.

The study regarding identification and information will probably never reach saturation point. During 2008 Willie Lightfoot, paramedic of Lifemed Ambulance Service in Pretoria, made a further addition to the study, namely that in some cases a purse or handbag containing a medical aid card is found at the accident scene, but the paramedics don't know to which of the patients involved in the accident it belongs.

After six years **CrisisOnCall** is now the leader in the field of identification and information and is being viewed by emergency personnel, among others, as a must for every family.

Even the person in charge of the Collision Unit of the SAPS is on record where he highlighted on a radio programme, the importance of membership to **CrisisOnCall**.