The avalanche buried Jason completely for several minutes. When uncovered, he was unresponsive with snow packed into his airway and no respirations. Avalanches are traumatic events often involving with a high-speed tumble and contact with hard objects, and, as in Jason's case, followed by several minutes of complete burial. Jason's primary problem is hypoxia leading to cardiac arrest. You anticipate severe hypothermia, thoracic trauma, and difficult evacuation as additional problems.

Clear Jason's airway first. Sweep the packed snow from his mouth and nose until you establish a patent airway. Because avalanche cardiac arrests almost always result from hypoxia, deliver two rescue breaths before checking for a pulse. If there is no pulse, begin CPR; otherwise, continue rescue breathing. Survival is possible with a burial time less than 35 minutes.

In a few minutes, Jason begins to breathe on his own and quickly awakens. The ribs on his right side are both painful [7] and tender, indicating a fracture and potentially internal damage. A pulmonary contusion or pleural delamination are possible, as is internal bleeding. Monitor for respiratory distress and volume shock. Insulate him aggressively to prevent hypothermia, which will worsen his breathing and circulation. If you have the resources, place him in a hypothermia package.

Because Jason was buried and unresponsive, perform a Focused Spine Assessment after placing him in a hypothermia package:

1. If he is awake, cooperative, without spinal pain or tenderness, shows normal motor and sensory function, and has no distracting injuries, clear his spine and handle him normally.

2. If he fails any part of the FSA, maintain spinal precautions and consider contacting search and rescue to bring a commercial litter and assist in the evacuation.

Although painful and tender, your leg is stable because it can bear your weight, has a near-normal range of motion, and has good distal CSM. Splint your leg to prevent further injury.

Jason requires urgent, level 1, evacuation because although he is breathing he has internal injuries that may worsen with time.