A New Rescue Device for Failed Intubation

Although physical assessment can often predict difficult intubation, a few cases will occur unexpectedly. The standard laryngeal mask airway (LMA) has been used for rescue ventilation and to facilitate intubation, with successful intubation rates ranging from 30% to 97%. The intubating LMA (ILMA), a new type of LMA developed to facilitate endotracheal tube placement, claims a 99% success rate.

Investigators from Bristol, England, used the ILMA to intubate two patients for whom conventional intubation had failed and a third patient with a cervical spine fracture. The patients with failed intubation had laryngoscopic views that did not extend beyond the tip of the epiglottis. Both were easily ventilated by mask and were intubated through the ILMA after it was successfully placed. The third patient had a non-union of a type 3 odontoid fracture, arthritis, and poor intubating parameters. Her elective intubation using the ILMA was also successful.

Comment: This preliminary case report should be interpreted with caution. We have tested the ILMA as part of the National Emergency Airway Course, and its design seems to facilitate intubation much more than the standard model does. The ILMA should be watched closely as further study defines its potential role in management of failed intubation in the ED.

— RM Walls

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