

Disposable LMA Performance as Good as Reusable

Emergency departments have begun to use laryngeal mask airways (LMAs), primarily for rescue from failed intubation or for management of the difficult airway. Since EDs use LMAs infrequently, the new disposable LMA is less costly. In this industry-sponsored study, Australian investigators compared the reusable LMA (R-LMA) with the disposable LMA (D-LMA) in 60 paralyzed, anesthetized adult patients undergoing elective surgery.

The patients had both LMAs inserted in random order and a blinded observer rated cuff performance at two inflation pressures. First attempt success rate (97% for the D-LMA vs. 98% for the R-LMA), insertion time (15 seconds vs. 13 seconds), fiberoptic position, and cuff effectiveness were identical. All cuffs performed best at lower (60 cm H₂O) rather than higher (180 cm H₂O) pressure.

Comment: The disposable LMA seems comparable to the reusable LMA, but is less expensive and may be better suited for infrequent ED use. The authors emphasize the fact that overinflation of the cuff actually impairs the cuff seal.

— *RM Walls*

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