

Experience of Transferring Critically Ill Patients on a Transport Ventilator in a Lower Middle-Income Country-Uganda

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Abstract : Transferring critically ill patients from one health facility to another poses a major risk to the patient because of increased oxygen demands. transferring patients with critical COVID-19 from a rural health center in a rural district to a national referral hospital over 350 km in 7 hours would require three size H oxygen cylinders for successful transfer. It was always difficult to arrange the three size cylinders in the ambulance as workspace was greatly compromised for the ambulance assistant. Purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact and effectiveness of transport ventilators on the transportation of the critically ill patients from rural health centers to national referral hospitals in Uganda. Methodology: This was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted in sept 2022 among critical care nurses and ambulance assistants who had used both methods of transportation (ventilators and cylinders). A semi structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data after informed consent. Results: From the findings, distribution of transport ventilators to the regional referral hospitals by the Ministry of Health has gradually improved patient transfer as the team requires less than one size oxygen cylinder to successfully transfer a patient. We use two ambulance assistants (a critical care nurse and another nurse who has been trained on use of the ventilator) when transferring patients with critical COVID-19 as the teams have to interchange over the long distance. Conclusions: Transport ventilators are effective and efficient in transferring critically ill patients, therefore should be rolled out to lower levels coupled with user training to improve outcomes of patients transferred in ambulances in lower income countries.

Keywords : emergency medical technician, critically ill, COVID-19, transport ventilator

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