



International Society for Heart & Lung Transplantation
www.isHLT.org

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Patients Requiring Life Supporting ECMO Therapy in the ICU Can Benefit from Ambulation

Presented at 36th Annual International Society of Heart & Lung Transplantation Meeting and Scientific Sessions

Washington, D.C. (April, 29, 2016) – At the 36th Annual International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation (ISHLT) Meeting & Scientific Sessions, presentations on how patients requiring life support with Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, or ECMO therapy, to keep them alive can benefit from ambulation while in Intensive Care Units (ICU). Bryan Boling, DNP, CCRN-CSC, University of Kentucky, shared his experience on getting patients up and moving while receiving ECMO, a very complex and invasive form of life supporting therapy. Their data suggests that patients with very severe lung disease, who are hospitalized awaiting a lung transplant, who are supported or “bridged” while waiting for a suitable donor with ambulatory ECMO, have reduced rates of complications following transplant and better overall success.

The benefits of ambulation, care that encourages patients out of bed and engaged in light activities such as sitting, standing or walking after an operation, have long been understood in other settings, said Boling. However ambulation in patients receiving ECMO in the ICU is a fairly new concept and requires a substantial team approach, according to his presentation. Some of the benefits of incorporating ambulation in patients requiring ECMO include similar advantages with any kind of mobility in the ICU including reduced risk of secondary complications, reduced incidence of muscle wasting and reduced length of stay in the ICU.

“More research is needed to understand how to get the biggest impact from ambulatory ECMO in patients waiting for lung transplantation,” Andrew Fisher, from Newcastle University and the 2016 ISHLT Scientific Program Chair. “The technological advances in the way ECMO is now delivered in the ICU have allowed the potential for ambulation of these critically ill patients to be realized. This study demonstrates the importance of this approach and the staff support required to support it.”

Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation has been in use since the 1970s and is often used with newborns experiencing respiratory problems. The ECMO machine acts as a heart and lung that pumps and oxygenates a patient’s blood, which allows the heart and lung to rest. This type of therapy is additionally utilized in adults as a bridge to lung transplantation. The ECMO is also known as extracorporeal life support (ECLS).

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About ISHLT

The International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation (ISHLT) is a not-for-profit professional organization with more than 2,700 members from over 45 countries dedicated to improving the care of patients with advanced heart or lung disease through transplantation, mechanical support and innovative therapies via research, education and advocacy. For more information, visit www.isHLT.org.

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