



Tracheal Stenosis After Intubation and Tracheostomy in Patients Admitted to Intensive Care Units: A Case-Control Study

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Abstract

Background: One of the most dangerous complications after endotracheal intubation or tracheostomy is tracheal stenosis.

Objectives: This study aimed to determine the personal and clinical characteristics of tracheal stenosis following intubation or tracheostomy in intensive care unit patients.

Methods: This is a nested case-control study. Thirty-five patients who suffered from tracheal stenosis from March 2016 to March 2021 and had been intubated and tracheostomized in intensive care units (ICU) were selected for the case group. The control group included 105 patients intubated and tracheostomized in ICU during the same period without tracheal stenosis. A demographic and clinical characteristics questionnaire was used to collect data from the patients' medical records.

Results: The mean length of intubation ($P < 0.001$), endotracheal and tracheostomy tube cuff pressure ($P < 0.001$), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) ($P = 0.043$), intubation history ($P = 0.045$), and airway management ($P < 0.001$) showed significant differences between the case and control groups. The logistic regression model revealed that COPD (OR = 8.519, $P = 0.037$), intubation history (OR = 3.939, $P = 0.013$), length of intubation (OR = 1.118, $P = 0.003$), age (OR = 0.960, $P = 0.030$), and endotracheal and tracheostomy tube cuff pressure (OR = 1.988, $P < 0.001$) were associated with tracheal stenosis. The time interval between intubation/tracheostomy ranged from approximately 28 to 938 days.

Conclusions: Given the impact of certain care practices during hospitalization on the occurrence of tracheal stenosis, such as the mean length of intubation, endotracheal and tracheostomy tube cuff pressure, and airway management, it is recommended that standardized training on these interventions be prioritized for staff in intensive care departments. Additionally, attention must be given to specific patient characteristics, such as age, COPD, and history of intubation.

Keywords: Intensive Care Unit, Intubation, Pressure, Tracheal Stenosis, Tracheostomy

1. Background

Patients admitted to intensive care units (ICU) often experience low levels of consciousness, acute respiratory failure, or cardiopulmonary arrest, and endotracheal intubation is a commonly performed procedure in critically ill patients (1). In these situations, it usually takes several days before the patient is extubated; therefore, with prolonged hospitalization, a tracheostomy is performed (2). Tracheostomy is a common procedure, performed in 2 - 11% of patients requiring mechanical ventilation in the ICU, and it is one of the most commonly performed procedures in

critically ill patients. Several advantages have been reported for performing tracheostomy following endotracheal intubation, including improving patient comfort, reducing airway resistance, ensuring safer and easier tracheal suction, improving patient communication, and enhancing oral feeding (3, 4). The tracheostomy tube is the preferred method of maintaining the airway in patients who require long-term intubation. The rate of intubation in the United States is 13 - 20 million per year (5). Although endotracheal intubation and mechanical ventilation are therapeutic approaches for managing critically ill patients, they are associated with serious complications.

introduce selection bias or information bias due to incomplete or inaccurate documentation. Third, in this study, all patients had only undergone open tracheostomy. Therefore, we could not determine the relationship between tracheal stenosis and the tracheostomy method.

5.2. Conclusions

This study showed that tracheal stenosis after intubation or tracheostomy is a serious complication. The main risk factors for tracheal stenosis are prolonged intubation, high endotracheal tube (ETT) and tracheostomy tube cuff pressure, COPD, intubation history, and age. The main protective factors include optimal cuff pressure and appropriate endotracheal intubation. Prevention of tracheal stenosis involves minimizing the length of intubation, monitoring and adjusting cuff pressure, selecting the appropriate method of airway management, and avoiding unnecessary trauma to the airway. Additionally, by knowing the time interval between intubation/tracheostomy and the onset of tracheal stenosis, patients can be followed up more effectively for this complication.

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Footnotes

Authors' Contribution: Study concept and design: R. D., M. E., and N. Sh.; acquisition of data: M. E.; analysis and interpretation of data: M. E., N. Sh., and R. D.;

drafting of the manuscript: M. E.; critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: N. Sh., R. D., and M. E.; statistical analysis: N. Sh., and M. E.; administrative, technical, and material support: R. D., M. E., and N. Sh.; study supervision: N. Sh., and R. D.

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Informed Consent: The data of this study was collected using the information recorded in the files archived in two hospitals affiliated to Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, and there was no contact with the patients. Also, the information was anonymous.

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