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Marta de Antonio-Cuscó^{a,*}, Purificación Pérez-Terán^{b,c,d,1}, Javier Mateu-de Antonio^{a,1}, Joan Ramon Masclans-Enviz^{b,c,d}

^a Pharmacy Department, Hospital del Mar, Barcelona, Spain

^b Intensive Care Unit, Hospital del Mar, Barcelona, Spain

^c Critical Illness Research Group (GREPAC), Institut Hospital del Mar d'Investigacions Mèdiques (IMIM), Spain
^d Department of Medicine, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Spain

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: mdeantonio@psmar.cat

(M. de Antonio-Cuscó).

¹ P. Pérez-Terán and J. Mateu-de Antonio contributed equally to this work.

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Do you treat loyal patients?



Tu paciente ¿es infiel?

Dear Editor,

Improving patient safety in healthcare is a challenging task, and, as it happens in love and war, we can use whatever tools we have available. Ideally, validated processes and tools will play a primary role in this endeavor; however, checklists and memory shortcuts like mnemonics have been widely used in clinical medicine since ancient times.¹ Mnemonics even have a playful-educational connotation that makes the work of residents or on-duty physicians more manageable. From FAST-HUG for a quick checklist regarding patient care² to mnemonics like A MUD PILE CAT or HARD UP, these tools have helped us avoid overlooking relevant aspects of healthcare and differential diagnosis at the ICU setting.

Ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) is a prevalent problem with a serious connotation that needs no introduction. The definition of VAP established by the American Thoracic Society and the Infectious Diseases Society of America (ATS/IDSA) is one of the most widely used ones and has remained unchanged over the years. Although it is accepted that there is no gold standard for diagnosis, the presence of new pulmonary infiltrates with clinical evidence of an infectious origin including fever, purulent sputum, leukocytosis, and/or worsening oxygenation are still valid criteria of the clinical practice guidelines proposed by this panel.³

I would like to suggest the mnemonic ES INFIEL (which is Spanish for 'is unfaithful') for Spanish-speaking regions, which has been used in our unit by residents and nurses during rounds over the past few years. It is a simple and concise tool that includes the ATS/IDSA criteria, which we pose as questions and often catch participants off guard. ES stands for sputum (change in characteristics and/or quantity of expectoration), IN for infiltrate (new or progressive opacity

on the thoracic x-ray, which is the starting point criterion), FÍ for fever or hypothermia, and EL for elevated leukocyte levels or leukopenia with the addition of increased fraction of inspired oxygen or positive end-expiratory pressure in mechanical ventilation. While this mnemonic does not confirm or rule out the presence of VAP *per se*, its purpose is to prompt discussion during rounds, avoid delays when recognizing these clinical manifestations, consider if changes in antibiotic prescription are necessary or further investigate by requesting additional analyses including cultures of bronchial secretions.

Whether the mnemonic ES INFIEL increases our sense of control over the healthcare process at the ICU or simply makes teamwork more enjoyable,¹ may God protect our patients from such an accusation!

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Pablo Álvarez-Maldonado

Unidad de Cuidados Intensivos Respiratorios, Hospital General de México Dr. Eduardo Liceaga, Mexico City, Mexico

E-mail address: pablo.alvarezma@anahuac.mx

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Inspiratory flow: The lost variable?



Flujo inspiratorio: ¿la variable perdida?

Dear Editor,

Mechanical power (MP) has been defined as the energy applied per cycle multiplied by respiratory rate (RR). Also, it has been associated with the development of ventilator-induced lung injury (VILI) and mortality in patients with acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS).^{1,2}

Controlling some of the variables that condition MP has become the paradigm of ventilatory strategy in ARDS: *a*) using appropriate levels of positive end-expiratory pressure (PEEP) to improve alveolar recruitment and functional residual capacity (FRC); *b*) limiting tidal volume (TV) above the FRC (strain); *c*) controlling transpulmonary pressure (stress) or its surrogate, driving pressure (DP). We may, however, have paid less attention to other determinants of MP like inspiratory flow.

ARDS is a heterogeneous condition with open alveolar units coexisting with units occupied by edema and collapsed units. How can inspiratory flow impact such a heterogeneous lung parenchyma? In a randomized study, Santini et al. compared the effects of low (400 mL/s), medium (800 mL/s), and high (1200 mL/s) inspiratory flows demonstrating a worsening of the Pendelluft phenomenon and an uneven distribution of TV with higher inspiratory flow rates.³ The time constant of the units varies, and those with longer time constants could be being ventilated inadequately with shorter inspiratory times and higher flow rates, thus leading to overdistension of the units ventilated earlier, increased DP, and more damage to the lung/s. On the other hand, rapid and repeated deformations with high flow rates could also lead to a heterogeneous distribution of MP, thus triggering intracycle rupture of the interstitial matrix separating the alveolar units and, ultimately, causing alveolar structural damage, especially in units with more deteriorated viscoelastic properties.⁴ We could hypothesize that the existence of an MP threshold for each alveolar unit, dependent upon inspiratory peak flow, is a contributing factor to VILI.

From our own point of view, the use of low inspiratory flows would be part of the measures aimed at homogenizing

lung ventilation along with the search for optimal PEEP to improve FRC and prone positioning. However, using low flows is associated with the risk of making expiratory time insufficient to achieve complete lung emptying, thus favoring the appearance of auto-PEEP. Also, asynchronies may occur in the context of low flows if the patient has preserved respiratory drive and high flow demand. Finally, we cannot overlook the importance of flow morphology (constant/decelerating) without being able to clarify the impact of each on lung injury.

Proper monitoring followed by the addition of these concepts into the search for an individualized ventilatory strategy poses an interesting and necessary challenge.⁵ Therefore, advocating for a comprehensive strategy aimed at minimizing ventilatory parameters in ARDS to avoid VILI, including all the variables that impact MP (TV, DP, PEEP, respiratory frequency, and flow) seems like the right thing to do

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