



Advanced Airway Management Position Statement

Statement of the Problem

Since the early 1970's, civilian flight nursing has become a recognized nursing specialty and an integral element in the emergency medical transport of the critically ill and injured.¹ Airway management is an essential life-saving procedure that is routinely practiced by transport teams throughout the world.

To properly fulfill this role of airway management, flight nursing duties require the assurance that each and every patient has an adequate airway. Often, this assurance requires the placement of an endotracheal tube into the patient's airway. Research has demonstrated that advanced airway management; primarily^{5, 6, 7} endotracheal intubation improves patient outcomes when properly initiated. Intubation is regarded as the most important procedure performed by pre-hospital personnel. Intubation can be a very difficult procedure to perform and result in great morbidity and mortality.²⁷ It has been demonstrated that drug-assisted intubation (DAI) provides a method of improving the success rate of intubation.^{3, 6-11} DAI describes the use of pharmacologic agents to facilitate endotracheal intubation. Drug assisted intubation includes rapid sequence intubation (RSI) or the use of neuromuscular blocking agents with or without sedative agents to rapidly facilitate endotracheal intubation. DAI also addresses the use of sedative or anesthetic^{3, 8, 9} induction agents to facilitate endotracheal intubation. Registered nurses play a significant role in advanced airway management. Research has demonstrated that with the appropriate education and continued clinical competency, registered nurses¹²⁻¹⁸ can manage difficult airways.

Association Position

- ASTNA recognizes that individual state boards of nursing direct registered nursing licensure. These regulatory bodies must be consulted in the development of advanced airway management protocols.
- ASTNA believes those registered nurses who perform advanced airway management in the transport environment should provide this care under protocols developed by a qualified Medical Director as described by the Medical Directors Core Curriculum developed by the Air Medical Physicians Association (www.ampa.org).



- ASTNA believes those registered nurses who perform advanced airway management must have a comprehensive educational and clinical skills program that documents and includes, but is not limited to:^{19, 20}
 - o Clinical assessment skills to ascertain when a patient is in need of an advanced airway
 - o Basic airway skills, including basic life saving (BLS) skills of opening and maintaining airway properly while providing effective ventilation utilizing mask ventilation with ambu bag.
 - o Indications for advanced airway management techniques
 - o Comprehensive education related to the use of drug assisted intubation (DAI) including the indications, contraindications, side-effects and associated complications to any medications that may be used to facilitate endotracheal intubation
 - o The use of equipment needed to safely monitor a patient requiring intubation including a pulse oximeter, cardiac monitor and end-tidal capnography. End-tidal capnography is also used in the continuous monitoring of endotracheal tube placement in the trachea.
 - o Use of alternative or rescue airways when endotracheal intubation cannot be achieved. These include but are not limited to, laryngeal mask airway (LMA), intubating laryngeal mask airways (I-LMA), King airway, and Combitube airway.
- ASTNA believes those registered nurses who perform advanced airway management should receive initial and on-going training that demonstrates their clinical competencies related to advanced airway management including but not limited to:
 - o Endotracheal intubation
 - o Surgical airways
 - o Alternative or rescue airways
- ASTNA believes that the transport programs that allow registered nurses to perform advanced airway management **MUST** have a PI/QA/CQI program that documents education and training. This process should also include data that document patient outcomes.
- ASTNA believes that the Medical Director and the appropriate Quality Management personnel should provide oversight and monitor intubation success rates. When issues are identified, an appropriate action plan should be generated, completed documented, and include follow up.

Rationale

Advanced airway management is not without risk for the development of complications²¹⁻²⁶. Therefore, it is mandatory that registered nurses who provide care in the transport environment must be educated and clinically competent in the administration of medications used for advanced airway management and have the skills required to initiate and maintain endotracheal intubation.



References

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Additional Resources:

Wyoming State Board of Nursing

Oklahoma State Board of Nursing: Rapid Sequence Intubation Guidelines:
Medication Administration by Registered Nurses.

Alabama State Board of Nursing

Approved by the ASTNA Board of Directors

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