Towards evidence based emergency medicine: Best BETs from the Manchester Royal Infirmary

Edited by Simon D Carley

BET 1: CAN THE VALUE OF END TIDAL CO₂ PROGNOSTICATE ROSC IN PATIENTS COMING INTO EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT WITH AN OUT-OF-HOSPITAL CARDIAC ARREST (OOHCA)?

Authors: Harish Venkatesh, Elizabeth Keating
Affiliation: Royal Berkshire Hospital, Berkshire, London, UK

ABSTRACT

A short cut review was carried out to establish whether end tidal CO₂ can be used to prognosticate in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. 232 papers were found of which 4 presented the best evidence to answer the clinical question. The author, date and country of publication, patient group studied, study type, relevant outcomes, results and study weaknesses of these best papers are tabulated. The clinical bottom line is that a single end tidal CO₂ reading cannot be used as an indicator to terminate resuscitation attempts in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

THREE-PART QUESTION

Patient group—(In adults admitted to the ED with an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest)

Intervention—(does end tidal CO₂ measurement)

Outcome—(predict/prognosticate return of spontaneous circulation)?

CLINICAL SCENARIO

A 60-year-old male is brought into the ED with an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OOHCA). All monitoring is attached while ALS protocol is ongoing, including CO₂ monitoring. You want to assess whether the patient is going to survive and thereby achieve a return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) and you wonder whether the patient's end tidal CO₂ (ETCO₂) level can prognosticate this.

SEARCH STRATEGY

Medline, Cochrane and EMBASE databases (2006 to present).

[exp HEART ARREST/ or "Heart arrest".ti,ab or "cardiac arrest".ti,ab] AND [ETCO₂.ti,ab or "end tidal co2".ti,ab or exp CAPNOGRAPHY/ or capnometry. ti,ab or {exp CARBON DIOXIDE/ AND exp TIDAL VOLUME/ AND 19 AND 20}] AND [{exp SURVIVAL/ OR exp

Best Evidence Topic reports (BETs) summarise the evidence pertaining to particular clinical questions. They are not systematic reviews, but rather contain the best (highest level) evidence that can be practically obtained by busy practising clinicians. The search strategies used to find the best evidence are reported in detail in order to allow clinicians to update searches whenever necessary. Each BET is based on a clinical scenario and ends with a clinical bottom line which indicates, in the light of the evidence found, what the reporting clinician would do if faced with the same scenario again.

The BETs published below were first reported at the Critical Appraisal Journal Club at the Manchester Royal Infirmary¹ or placed on the BestBETs website. Each BET has been constructed in the four stages that have been described elsewhere.² The BETs shown here together with those published previously and those currently under construction can be seen at <http://www.bestbets.org>.³ Three BETs are included in this issue of the journal.

Title	
1	Can the value of end tidal CO ₂ prognosticate ROSC in patients coming into ED emergency department with an out- of -hospital cardiac arrest (OOHCA)?
2	Trendelenburg Position helps to cardiovert patients in SVT back to sinus rhythm.
3	Peripheral Metaraminol infusion in the Emergency Department.
1	Carley SD, Mackway-Jones K, Jones A, et al. Moving towards evidence based emergency medicine: use of a structured critical appraisal journal club. <i>J Accid Emerg Med</i> 1998;15:220–2.
2	Hou LCMackway-Jones K, Carley SD, Morton RJ, et al. The best evidence topic report: Aa modified CAT for summarising the available evidence in emergency medicine. <i>J Accid Emerg Med</i> 1998;15:222–6.
3	Mackway-Jones K. Bestbets.org: odds on favourite for evidence in emergency medicine reaches the world wide web. <i>Emer Med J</i> 2000;17:235–6.

SURVIVAL ANALYSIS/} or exp TREATMENT OUTCOME/ or {(rosc OR "return of spontaneous circulation").ti,ab} or exp "OUTCOME ASSESSMENT (HEALTH CARE)"/]

Conference abstracts removed. Inpatient studies removed. Case reports, editorials and notes removed. Paediatric studies removed. Duplicate results removed. Limited to Human studies, English papers and solely papers between 2006 and 2016. Studies that did not answer research question removed manually.

SEARCH OUTCOME

232 articles obtained of which 4 were of sufficient quality (table 1). Results already reviewed in these meta-analyses were not presented below.

COMMENTS

Overall the recent paper by Hartmann *et al* is well-written and the most up to date and most pertinent study on this research topic. While the quality of the study may have been deemed low by the GRADE

criteria, it is important to remember that ETCO₂ in participants (with and without ROSC) can be compiled, despite the variety of interventions in the included studies, as ETCO₂ is a proxy measurement for cardiac output—a physiological outcome that can be achieved under many differing circumstances. In a meta-analysis such as this one where homogenous study design is not necessary to evaluate a physiological state, the level of evidence appears falsely poor. This has been clearly addressed by the authors. This paper gives a clear idea of what ETCO₂ level should be aimed for when resuscitating patients and thereby can prognosticate between a positive and a negative outcome. It also emphasises that current guidelines may need to be updated to acknowledge that an aim of 10–20 mm Hg may be too low. The paper by Poon *et al* is important in deciding whether a 3 min ETCO₂ level of ≤10 mm Hg can help clinicians decide whether to discontinue resuscitation on the basis that there is a much greater chance of morbidity and mortality. The paper by Akinci *et al*

Table 1 Relevant papers

Author, year, country of publication	Patient group	Study type (level of evidence)	Outcomes	Key results	Study weaknesses
Hartmann <i>et al</i> , 2015, ¹ USA	7276 subjects from 27 studies used for qualitative analysis. 6565 subjects from 20 studies used for average ETCO ₂ . 6550 subjects from 19 studies for meta-analysis	Systematic review and meta-analysis	Participants with ROSC after CPR have statistically higher levels of ETCO ₂	<p>The overall mean ETCO₂ value was significantly higher among participants with ROSC than those without ROSC (25.8/–9.8 mm Hg vs 13.1/–8.2 mm Hg, $p=0.001$)</p> <p>The average ETCO₂ level was 25 mm Hg in participants with ROSC</p> <p>The mean difference in ETCO₂ was 12.7 mm Hg (95% CI 10.3 to 15.1) between participants with and without ROSC ($p<0.001$)</p> <p>The mean difference in ETCO₂ was not modified by the receipt of sodium bicarbonate, uncontrolled minute ventilation or era of resuscitation guidelines</p> <p>The overall quality of data by Grades of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation criteria is very low, but there are currently no prospective data</p>	<p>(1) The overall level of evidence was characterised as very low by the GRADE criteria. (2) Mostly only cohort studies analysed (26/27 studies). (3) Big variance on time taken to initiate resuscitation, quality of compressions and use of different methods to deliver compressions between studies. (4) Presence of serious inconsistency, as measured by the degree of heterogeneity ($p<0.001$ and I^2 value of 98.5%)</p>
Poon <i>et al</i> , 2016, ² Hong Kong	319 patients	Prospective cohort study	A 3 min ETCO ₂ ≤ 10 mm Hg was associated with poor prognosis and low chance of ROSC	<p>A 3 min ETCO₂ > 10 mm Hg was a predictor of ROSC with OR 18.16 (95% CI 4.79 to 51.32, $p<0.001$). In other words, when cardiac arrested, for a patient with a 3 min ETCO₂ > 10 mm Hg the odds of ROSC was 18 times higher than those with ETCO₂ ≤ 10 mm Hg</p>	<p>Large number of patients excluded due to improper documentation of the use of ETCO₂ (approximately one-third). (2) Quality of chest compressions was not controlled or measured. (3) The decision to stop resuscitation may have been influenced by the ETCO₂ value at the time, which could have potential bias on ROSC rate</p>
Akinci <i>et al</i> , 2014, ³ Turkey	80 patients	Prospective cohort study	PetCO ₂ values are higher in the ROSC group	<p>ETCO₂ levels of the ROSC group in the 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th min were significantly higher compared with the Exitus group ($p<0.001$)</p> <p>In distinguishing ROSC and Exitus, ETCO₂ measurements within 5–20 min intervals showed highest performance on the 20th (area below the ROC curve was determined to be 0.850 (95% CI 0.721 to 0.980)) and lowest on the 5th minute (area below the ROC curve was determined to be 0.730 (95% CI 0.610 to 0.849))</p>	<p>(1) ETCO₂ levels not measured on transport to hospital. ETCO₂ value differences, which might be resulting from different aetiologies (asphyxia and cardiac) could not be determined as a result of this. (2) Small sample size. (3) No clear indication or suggestion of what ETCO₂ level can be used to prognosticate ROSC—however, does give an indication of when best to assess this. (4) Published in a low impact medical journal</p>
Pantazopoulos <i>et al</i> , 2015, ⁴ Greece	42 studies included in qualitative synthesis	Narrative review		<p>None of the patients who had ETCO₂ levels less than 14 mm Hg survived</p> <p>Although changes and trends in ETCO₂ values during CPR are more important than absolute ETCO₂ levels, current data suggest that certain cut-off values may be targeted; an ETCO₂ > 10 mm Hg is correlated with increased possibility for ROSC</p> <p>Rescuers should target a 20 min ETCO₂ of at least 20 mm Hg</p> <p>The value of a trend more than absolute ETCO₂ values may be most important in the presence of a treatable cause</p> <p>An abrupt increase in ETCO₂ under constant ventilation and CO₂ production, provides the fastest indication of ROSC</p>	No systematic review or meta-analysis done

CPR, cardiopulmonary resuscitation; ETCO₂, end tidal CO₂; PetCO₂, end tidal CO₂ tension; ROSC, return of spontaneous circulation.

highlights that a 20 min ETCO₂ check has a greater performance in predicting ROSC than earlier times, although the data itself may not be robust enough to go by from a resuscitation guideline perspective. Having said this, the data are important and as such more studies in this research topic would definitely help.

Clinical bottom line

Current literature suggests that: (1) Our current ETCO₂ aim of 10–20 mm Hg may be inadequate and should be modified to 25 mm Hg. (2) A 3–5 min ETCO₂ level of ≤10 mm Hg is associated with bad prognosis and as such, it may be beneficial to consider stopping patient resuscitation should this be the clinical case. (3) It is important to see the trend of ETCO₂ rather than making a decision solely on one specific value, as sometimes an abrupt increase in ETCO₂ could be a sign of impending ROSC. (4) More robust prospective data on the optimal ETCO₂ value that is associated with ROSC would be helpful in defining a more accurate future target for intervention.

REFERENCES

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