

# Effect of positive end-expiratory pressure on intrapulmonary shunt at different levels of fractional inspired oxygen

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**ABSTRACT** In 10 patients undergoing ventilation, venous admixture was measured at different values of positive end-expiratory pressure (PEEP). The measurements were performed at the level of fractional inspired oxygen ( $F_{IO_2}$ ) at which each patient was ventilated, and at  $F_{IO_2}=1$ . In patients ventilated at  $F_{IO_2}$  between 0.21 and 0.3 venous admixture was not modified by PEEP, while in patients ventilated with  $F_{IO_2}$  between 0.4 and 0.6, venous admixture decreased significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ). With  $F_{IO_2}=1$ , increased PEEP produced a reduction in venous admixture in all cases ( $p < 0.05$ ). These observations suggest that in patients similar to ours, PEEP does not reduce venous admixture at low levels of  $F_{IO_2}$  (0.21-0.3), and the observed reduction with PEEP at  $F_{IO_2}=1$  may be misinterpreted.

In patients with acute respiratory failure, positive end-expiratory pressure (PEEP) has been said to reduce pulmonary venous admixture and improve arterial blood oxygenation.<sup>1-3</sup> The efficiency of PEEP can thus be evaluated by its influence on venous admixture. Most studies dealing with venous admixture are performed at  $F_{IO_2}=1$ . However, modifications of  $F_{IO_2}$  are known to alter shunt values.<sup>4</sup> It is not clear whether the beneficial effect of PEEP on pulmonary shunting at lower values of  $F_{IO_2}$  is the same as at  $F_{IO_2}=1$ . In this report we describe the results of investigations carried out on patients submitted to various levels of PEEP at different values of  $F_{IO_2}$ .

## Patients and methods

The study was conducted on 10 adult patients ventilated with a Bennett MA-1 respirator for various reasons (table 1). Venous admixture was calculated without PEEP, and again at 5, 10, and 15 cm  $H_2O$  PEEP, after a 15-minute period of equilibrium at each PEEP level. For each patient measurements were performed at the  $F_{IO_2}$  as determined by the clinical status, and repeated at  $F_{IO_2}=1$ . The patients were sedated,

and vital signs and minute volume were repeatedly checked, in order to confirm steady state conditions. Blood samples were drawn simultaneously into heparinised glass syringes from an indwelling arterial line and from a pulmonary artery catheter (Edwards Model 7FD). The venous admixture was calculated from the shunt equation:

$$\frac{\dot{Q}_{sp}}{\dot{Q}_t} = \frac{C\dot{c}O_2 - CaO_2}{C\dot{c}O_2 - C\dot{v}O_2}$$

Where:  $CaO_2 = 1.39 \cdot Hb \cdot Sat_{aO_2} + 0.0031 PaO_2$   
 $CvO_2 = 1.39 \cdot Hb \cdot Sat_{vO_2} + 0.0031 PvO_2$

For  $C\dot{c}O_2$  the alveolar air equation was used:

$$PAO_2 = F_{IO_2} (P_{Bar} - P_{H_2O}) - PACO_2 (F_{IO_2} + (1 - F_{IO_2})/RQ)$$

and the respiratory quotient (RQ) was calculated for patients ventilated with  $F_{IO_2}$  between 0.21 and 0.3 according to:

$$RQ = \frac{F_{ECO_2} (1 - F_{IO_2})}{F_{IO_2} (1 - F_{EO_2} - F_{ECO_2}) - F_{EO_2}} \quad 5, 6$$

For respiratory gases oxygen concentrations were measured using a paramagnetic oxygen analyser (Servomex OA-250) and carbon dioxide concentrations were determined with the Godart Capnograph. Blood gases and pH were measured with the Astrup Radiometer apparatus. Oxygen saturation was calculated according to the Gomez formula.<sup>7</sup> All calculations, including

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Table 1 Effect of PEEP on venous admixture at indicated  $FIO_2$  and at  $FIO_2 = 1$ 

Diagnostic	Sex	Age (yr)	$FIO_2$	PEEP (cm H <sub>2</sub> O)				$FIO_2$	PEEP (cm H <sub>2</sub> O)			
				0	5	10	15		0	5	10	15
				Multiple trauma, sepsis	M	46	0.21		0.26	0.28	0.25	0.26
Multiple trauma, uraemia	F	64	0.21	0.33	0.33	0.37	0.39	1	0.30	0.32	0.30	0.34
Chronic obstructive airways disease, sepsis	F	74	0.21	0.18	0.20	0.15	0.17	1	0.19	0.13	0.15	0.15
Brain contusion, pneumonia	M	32	0.29	0.28	0.36	0.31	0.39	1	0.20	0.17	0.20	0.22
Burns 85%	F	40	0.30	0.36	0.34	0.32	0.31	1	0.27	0.24	0.17	0.19
Chest trauma	F	32	0.40	0.17	0.20	0.12	0.10	1	0.24	0.24	0.26	0.24
Brain and lung contusion	M	64	0.40	0.32	0.27	0.35	0.29	1	0.30	0.28	0.25	0.18
Peritonitis, sepsis	M	78	0.41	0.34	0.29	0.29	0.32	1	0.28	0.23	0.21	0.22
Peritonitis, pneumonia	F	72	0.47	0.33	0.38	0.36	0.21	1	0.36	0.35	0.26	0.21
Pneumonia, cerebrovascular accident	M	72	0.60	0.38	0.36	0.35	0.34	1	0.34	0.39	0.36	0.34

statistics, were performed on a PDP 11/05 computer.

## Results

The 10 patients were divided into two groups according to the  $FIO_2$  indicated by their clinical condition. The first group was ventilated at  $FIO_2$  between 0.21 and 0.3, and the second group at  $FIO_2$  between 0.4 and 0.6. Table 1 contains a summary of the shunt values in both groups as measured at the patient's required  $FIO_2$  and at  $FIO_2 = 1$ .

In fig 1 the influence of PEEP (from 0 to 15 cm H<sub>2</sub>O) on  $Pao_2$ ,  $CaCO_2$ ,  $a-vDO_2$ , and intrapulmonary shunt is compared during ventilation with  $FIO_2$  between 0.21 and 0.3 and at  $FIO_2 = 1$ . In the first instance PEEP has little influence on these values. In the same patients however, the same procedure, but at  $FIO_2 = 1$ , resulted in a significant decrease in the intrapulmonary shunt ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Figure 2 depicts the results in the five other patients. In this group increased PEEP induced a significant increase of  $Pao_2$  and  $CaO_2$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), and a significant decrease in shunt ( $p < 0.01$ ) during ventilation with  $FIO_2 = 0.4-0.6$ , as well as during ventilation with  $FIO_2$  equal to unity (increase in  $Pao_2$  and  $CaO_2$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and decrease in shunt  $p < 0.05$ ). A slight increase of  $a-v DO_2$  in these patients was not significant at either level of  $FIO_2$ .

## Discussion

In 1942, Berggren suggested a method of calculating intrapulmonary venous admixture by the inhalation of pure oxygen,<sup>8,9</sup> and thus two of the problems associated with shunt determination were eliminated. By using an increased oxygen concentration, it is possible to avoid the shunt effect caused by the perfusion of partially ventilated alveoli.<sup>4</sup> This method thus allows the

determination of the "true shunt", which is caused by an admixture of venous blood from non-ventilated parts of the lung. The second problem is the difficulty in measuring or calculating the alveolar oxygen concentrations required for intrapulmonary shunt calculations. This can be measured using a fast response oxygen analyser, or calculated using the alveolar air equation. Since fast response oxygen

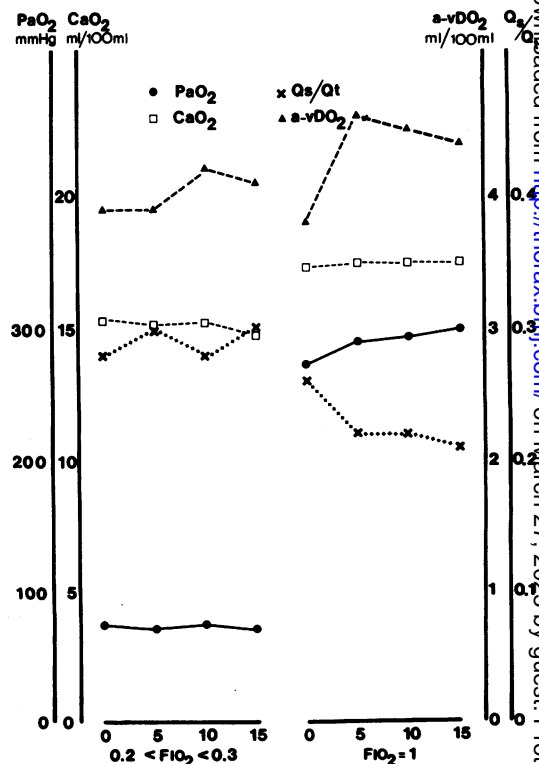


Fig 1 Effect of PEEP on  $Pao_2$ ,  $CaO_2$ ,  $a-vDO_2$ , and venous admixture, with an  $FIO_2$  value between 0.21 and 0.3 and with  $FIO_2 = 1$  (mean values of five patients).

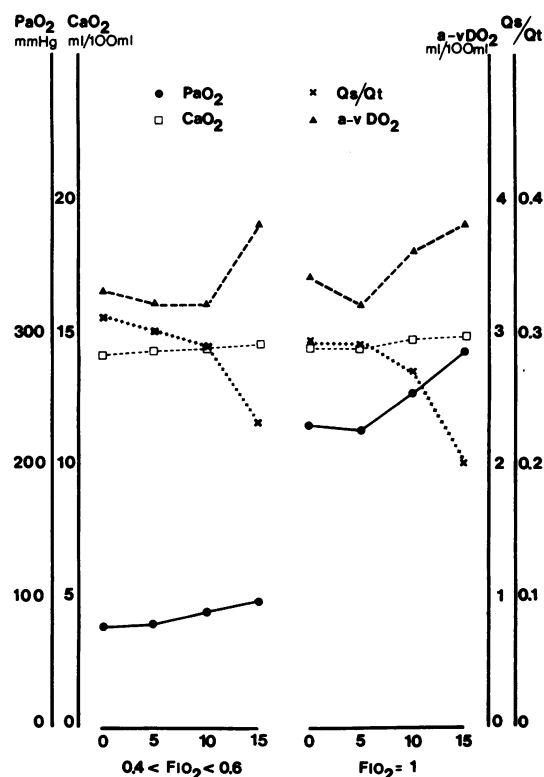


Fig 2 Effect of PEEP on  $Pao_2$ ,  $CaO_2$ ,  $a-vDO_2$ , and venous admixture, with a  $FIO_2$  value between 0.4 and 0.6, and with  $FIO_2=1$  mean values of five patients).

analysers are not always available and the resolution of the alveolar air equation requires the determination of  $FEO_2$  and  $FECO_2$  the use of  $FIO_2=1$  will greatly simplify calculation for the venous admixture. Indeed, at  $FIO_2=1$  the "correction factor"  $(FIO_2 + (1 - FIO_2)/RQ)$  is cancelled to unity, and the alveolar air equation becomes:  $PAO_2 - FIO_2 (P_{Bar} - PH_2O) - P_{CaO_2}$ . Inhalation of pure oxygen is therefore widely used during venous admixture measurements for clinical and scientific purposes.<sup>10-15</sup> However, it is now well documented that high  $FIO_2$  influences the pulmonary shunt by itself. Several workers found an increase in the pulmonary shunt after high  $FIO_2$  administration, explained by a reduction in the functional residual capacity (FRC)<sup>13 16</sup> because of absorption atelectasis.<sup>10 11 16-20</sup> This inverse correlation between FRC and venous admixture has been demonstrated previously.<sup>21 22</sup> Otherwise, the shunt may decrease when  $FIO_2$  increases.<sup>13</sup> If it

is obvious that variations of  $FIO_2$  modify the value of the shunt, it is also evident that measurements of venous admixture should be performed at the particular  $FIO_2$  inhaled by the patient, as indicated by the clinical status. The clinical value of this form of shunt calculation is also preferable, as it takes into account changes in ventilation-perfusion disturbances when the V/Q ratio is greater than zero.<sup>23 24</sup> The difficulty in calculating the venous admixture with values of  $FIO_2$  lower than unity does not justify shunt measurements with pure oxygen. Moreover, we found that usually another method can be used to eliminate the "correcting factor" for simplifying the alveolar air equation. When  $FIO_2$  is higher than 0.3, one can assume the RQ value as constant and equal to unity, as usual variations of the RQ values cannot modify the calculated shunt. We calculated the venous admixture at the patient's  $FIO_2$  with RQ values varying from 0.6 to 1.4, and it became apparent that only in patients ventilated with an  $FIO_2=0.21$  did modification of the RQ values influence the calculated venous admixture, while for all  $FIO_2$  values higher than 0.29 venous admixture varied only slightly (table 2). For these reasons, in patients with an enriched concentration of oxygen, which is usually the case, one may assume for purposes of calculation that the RQ is equal to unity, and eliminate the correction factor  $(FIO_2 + (1 - FIO_2)/1 = 1)$ . However, in patients breathing room air, or air slightly enriched with oxygen, the shunt has to be calculated using the real RQ values.

Most of the studies on the influence of PEEP on venous admixture were performed on patients ventilated with  $FIO_2=1$ . With few exceptions,<sup>25 26</sup> a decrease in shunt value was usually found with PEEP,<sup>1 2 27-33</sup> correlated with an increased FRC.<sup>2 31-34</sup> Therefore, venous admixture is considered as one of the main factors in evaluating "optimal PEEP".<sup>29</sup> Considering the influence of  $FIO_2$  on the calculated pulmonary shunt found

Table 2 Influence of respiratory quotient values on the calculated shunt at different levels of  $FIO_2$ . Patients were divided according to their  $FIO_2$ , and mean pulmonary shunt of each group was calculated, using the measured blood gas values and assuming values of RQ varying from 0.6 to 0.4

$FIO_2$	RQ 0.5	0.8	1	1.2	1.4
0.21	0.23	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.29
0.29-0.30	0.31	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32
0.40-0.41	0.24	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
0.47-0.60	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34

in our patients, it is questionable, however, whether the observed influence of PEEP on venous admixture at  $FI_{O_2}$  equal to unity reflects the effect of PEEP at lower levels of  $FI_{O_2}$ .

In this study PEEP had no influence on venous admixture at low levels of  $FI_{O_2}$  (0.21–0.3), suggesting that PEEP has little value in patients who can be ventilated at this  $FI_{O_2}$ . The significant reduction in venous admixture produced by PEEP in the same patients at  $FI_{O_2}=1$  demonstrates that, in order to evaluate the real effect of PEEP on venous admixture as a guide to therapy, measurements have to be carried out at the patient's required  $FI_{O_2}$ . At higher levels of  $FI_{O_2}$  the influence of  $FI_{O_2}$  variations on the PEEP effect is apparently less important; the reduction in venous admixture obtained with PEEP in patients ventilated at  $FI_{O_2}=0.4$ – $0.6$  as similar to that observed when they were ventilated at  $FI_{O_2}=1$ .

We have shown that the influence of PEEP in our patients varied with the value of  $FI_{O_2}$ , and that its effect on pulmonary shunt was absent when  $FI_{O_2}$  was lower than 0.3. Assuming that PEEP increases FRC, while high  $FI_{O_2}$  decreases it, the beneficial effect of PEEP at high  $FI_{O_2}$  could be partially explained by the reduction of this side effect of the high  $FI_{O_2}$ , but further ventilation-perfusion alterations as well as variations in pulmonary resistance and pulmonary fluid content must be considered. It is possible that for special situations, as in pulmonary oedema or drowning, PEEP could be effective at low  $FI_{O_2}$ , but none of our patients had these conditions.

In summary, our results suggest that PEEP does not influence the intrapulmonary shunt at low levels of  $FI_{O_2}$  (0.21–0.3). When  $FI_{O_2}$  is greater than 0.3 the calculation of venous admixture can be simplified by neglecting the "correction factor" of the alveolar air equation.

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