

Experiences From a Multinational Pediatric Difficult Airway Whatsapp Group – A Study From the Pedi-R Collaborative

Presenting Author: Evelina Pankiv, MD, University of Toronto, ON

Co-authors: Clyde Matava, MB ChB, MMed, University of Toronto, ON, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, ON; John Fiadjoe, MD, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PA

Introduction: The management of the difficult airway in the pediatric patient remains a challenge. The Pediatric Difficult Intubation Registry (a special interest group of the Society for Pediatric Anesthesia), the Difficult Airway Society - UK, have established evidence-based guidelines on techniques for improving patient outcomes in the pediatric difficult airway population. Despite this, providers may require advice from colleagues. The Pedi-R WhatsApp™ group was started by one of the researchers in 2014 and is hosted on a WhatsApp™ discussion group whose goal was to foster discussion among pediatric anesthesia airway experts. Patient or parental consent is required to post patient information. The goal of this study was to gather information on the perceived utility of the WhatsApp™ group to members and the overall usage.

Methods: Following local ethics approval, members of the Pedi-R were invited to complete an online survey. The survey was pre-tested by members of the Pedi-R scientific committee. Data were collected using Redcap. Descriptive analytics were performed.

Results: 46 out of 64 members completed the survey with a response rate of 60%. Responders were from 13 countries with 25 (56.8%) responders from the United States. The majority of responders identified their sites as tertiary teaching pediatric hospitals 27 (62.8%) or tertiary teaching mixed pediatric/adult hospitals 12 (27.9%). 48% of responders were associate professor/full professor/professor emeritus with 50% as lecturer/assistant professor. The top three posts included advice seeking/suggestions regarding patient management scenarios 31 (18.0%), sharing interesting case(s) for education and/or discussion 27 (15.6%), and asking for advice related to a specific airway case 26 (15.1%). The most frequently reported reason for not posting in the PeDi Collaborative WhatsApp group was "I don't like participating in mass chat groups but I enjoy reading the discussions that take place" 9 (45.0%) The majority of responders, 27/35 (77.1%), either agreed or strongly agreed that they found discussions translatable into their own clinical practice. 45.7% reported that they changed a plan based on the advice provided. 91.4% of respondents agreed that the group informed them on the variance in practice across the globe. 85.2% felt connected to peers via the group and 94.2% would continue being a part of the group.

Discussion: We demonstrate that a Whatsapp based group is able to offer realtime and robust peer support and discussions on the management of pediatric difficult airways. Furthermore, the growth of the group to 13 countries suggests that media such as Whatsapp offer few barriers to users and can inform and potentially improve patient outcomes.

Conclusion: The Pedi-R Collaborative Whatsapp group has been successful in fostering discussion and informing the management of the pediatric difficult airway.