

Noninvasive positive-pressure ventilation: consensus, controversies and new horizons

The Noninvasive positive-pressure ventilation: consensus, controversies and new horizons ERS School course was held in Germany in February 2009. The course aimed to provide an overview of current noninvasive ventilation (NIV) practice in acute and chronic settings and to provide an evidence base for NIV in the intensive care unit, intermediate care unit, respiratory ward and homecare. Hands-on experience in setting up various ventilators for different uses was given. The emphasis of the course was to focus on practical problem-solving and improving the skills of all who attended. Running since 2003, the ERS School courses are aimed at all health professionals within the respiratory field and provide high-quality, state-of-the-art information and practical sessions which, it is hoped, directly impact on the clinical practice of delegates. Delegates are given the opportunity to meet and discuss their current clinical problems with the leaders in their field and also are able to network and create new contacts with attendees from around the world.

Always aiming to improve and to reflect the needs of the audience, the latest initiative for these courses is, where appropriate, to integrate practical hands-on sessions with representatives from industry providing the latest medical devices for delegates to try. The companies have no input into the content of the course but, as seen with the NIV course, when conducted appropriately these sessions can provide a valuable and interactive adjunct to the programme.

The following review gives the perspectives of two attendees – a doctor and a nurse – working in the field of NIV.

Perspective from Biswajit Chakrabarti

The use of NIV is arguably one of the most exciting and rapidly developing areas within respiratory medicine. This 3-day ERS School course was aimed at clinicians, physiotherapists and other healthcare professionals, and covered the key areas relevant to NIV. The format comprised a mixture of lectures and practical interactive workshops with small group-based discussions with faculty members. On two of the days, this was supplemented by hands-on sessions where delegates were able to familiarise themselves with the latest ventilators and meet representatives from the industry (figure 1).



B. Chakrabarti¹
C. Phillips²

¹University Hospital Aintree, Liverpool, UK. ²Auckland City Hospital, Auckland, New Zealand.

Correspondence
Biswajit Chakrabarti
University Hospital Aintree
Liverpool
UK
E-mail: biz@doctors.org.uk

Cherry Phillips
Auckland City Hospital
Auckland
New Zealand
E-mail: CherryP@adhb.govt.nz

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Figure 1
Hands-on demonstrations of new ventilators.

Following an introduction from one of the organising committee, Prof. Bernd Schönhofer, the programme commenced with a debate regarding the use of NIV in stable chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Both sides of this controversial argument were presented clearly, leaving much food for thought. A series of lectures followed regarding the role of NIV in obesity hypoventilation syndrome, key issues in paediatric NIV, the appropriate use of cough assist in neuromuscular disease and the importance of the interface in the successful application of NIV. The afternoon session consisted of workshops covering a variety of topics relevant to clinicians. These included how to effectively manage patients with significant bulbar dysfunction, key issues to consider when initiating a patient on NIV and how to improve ventilator compliance in real-world settings. The workshop covering the area of ethical and end-of-life issues related to NIV was particularly useful and it was valuable to listen to the viewpoints of other healthcare professionals, such as physiotherapists and nurse specialists. The day ended with a welcome cocktail where we were able to network with colleagues from all over Europe and beyond.

The second day began with a discussion of the role of NIV in established acute scenarios, such as COPD exacerbations. Faculty members then debated the more controversial subject of NIV in acute hypoxaemic respiratory failure. This was followed by extremely informative sessions regarding the emerging role of NIV in weaning and during the postoperative phase and an update on the use of NIV in rehabilitation as well as palliative care. The afternoon workshops dealt with handling everyday practicalities of treating patients on NIV, such as managing intolerance of NIV in the acute setting, improving patient-ventilator interaction

and ensuring adequate patient training when commencing long-term ventilation.

The final day consisted of lectures discussing the development of a competent NIV unit. Techniques of how best to monitor patients while on NIV, including the role of transcutaneous carbon dioxide monitoring, and programmes analysing patient-ventilator interaction were debated. The issue of staff training and specific competencies required in terms of establishing an NIV service were also dealt with. This was supplemented by guidance in terms of protocol development for hospitals involved in the application of NIV during acute scenarios in addition to those units involved in weaning.

The course covered basic practicalities as well as debating the latest research, developments and applications of NIV. The flavour reflected the multidisciplinary focus integral to building a successful NIV service. There was ample opportunity throughout for discussing difficult cases with faculty members. Finally, I would like to thank the organisers, in particular Lucy Templeman from the ERS, for all their efforts in ensuring the programme ran smoothly and successfully.

Perspective from Cherry Phillips

As an NIV Nurse Specialist from New Zealand, I am constantly looking for courses and conferences that encompass all aspects of NIV. In the past, I have attended several short courses with only limited NIV coverage. However, after searching online for many months I came across the ERS NIV course. Reading the content of the curriculum, I decided that this programme was definitely tailored to extend my knowledge, while giving me the ability to network with other professionals working in similar circumstances.

I was not disappointed: this course delivered everything it had promised and more. It had something for everyone, from the learner to more practised professionals. The course was exceptionally well organised and communication was meticulous and timely. The course itself was current, topical and one of the most in-depth I have attended.

For any health professional with a passion for NIV, this course is a must. It provided many tools for the assessment and interpretation of NIV. I feel more confident in the skills gained and have already shared these with my colleagues at home.

Figure 2
The faculty.





Figure 3
The whole group.

From the start of the course, the friendly banter of the faculty created a relaxed positive atmosphere, promoting open participant discussions. Skilled hands-on workshops added to the overall comprehensive learning experience. The in-depth programme encompassed many hot topics and controversies in NIV today. While not all of these

had complete solutions, healthy robust discussion gave everyone a chance to reflect and look introspectively at their current practice.

I'd like to thank the faculty and the ERS Educational Co-ordinators for a truly superb course that was well worth the distance I travelled to participate.