

Foreword



Amal Mattu, MD, FAAEM, FACEP
Consulting Editor

“The unofficial mantra of the specialty of emergency medicine is ‘A-B-C: airway, breath sounds, circulation.’”¹ Though simplistic, this mantra emphasizes the appropriate priority for management of critically ill patients. From the very beginning in learning about emergency medicine, students and house officers learn that concerns about a patient’s airway must precede all other issues. Loss of a patient’s airway produces a more rapid transit to the morgue than any other condition. Consequently, proper training in management and protection of the airway is considered one of the most basic, yet critical, skills of any emergency physician. Virtually all emergency medicine training programs employ basic anesthesia rotations, skills labs utilizing fresh cadavers or simulation mannequins, advanced trauma airway rotations, and other assorted methods of airway training. Educational sessions in airway management are widely available for experienced emergency physicians as well—every year in the US and around the world, emergency medicine continuing medical education conferences offer numerous advanced lectures and training workshops in airway management. It would certainly be appropriate to amend the mantra of emergency medicine to A-A-A: airway, airway, airway! All other organ systems and concerns must usually take a backseat.

In this issue of *Emergency Medicine Clinics of North America*, Guest Editor Dr. Sharon Mace has assembled an outstanding group of physicians to provide an invaluable resource to update and advance our knowledge and skills in airway management. The articles are split into several sections, including methods of monitoring the airway, emerging therapies, and advanced intubation techniques. The authors address some of the basics in this issue, but the overall focus is on advanced modalities; consequently, there are multiple articles that focus on difficult and failed airways.

This issue represents an important contribution to education and clinical practice in emergency medicine. In itself, this issue constitutes a full reading curriculum for anyone that is beyond the *basics* of airway management and wants to advance to

a much higher level. This curriculum is certain to improve the care of our patients in the emergency department. Our thanks go to Dr. Mace and all of the authors in this outstanding issue.

Amal Mattu, MD, FAAEM, FACEP
Department of Emergency Medicine
University of Maryland School of Medicine
110 S. Paca Street, 6th Floor, Suite 100
Baltimore, MD 21201, USA

E-mail address:
amattu@smail.umaryland.edu (A. Mattu)

REFERENCE

1. Mattu A, Olshaker JS. Preface: Respiratory emergencies. *Emerg Med Clin N Am* 2003;21:xv-xvi.