

# EARLY ACTIVITY OF CRITICALLY ILL, MECHANICALLY VENTILATED PATIENTS

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## **Purpose**

Study aims were to assess the impact of early physical activity among critically ill, mechanically ventilated patients on total number of ventilator days and overall critical care length of stay.

## **Background**

Current practice consists of keeping all mechanically ventilated patients on bed rest until after extubation.

## **Methods**

Daily assessment of ventilated patients was performed by the nursing staff, based upon outlined criteria, to determine eligibility for activity. Once deemed appropriate, physical activity was slowly increased from positioning the bed in the chair position to getting patients out of bed to a chair, as tolerated on an individual basis. Effectiveness was evaluated based upon data collected regarding total number of ventilator days and overall critical care length of stay on a quarterly and monthly basis.

## **Results**

Based upon the activity criteria, 11 patients were deemed appropriate for this study. Of these 11 patients, all were positioned with their bed in the chair position, 6 were placed in the gurney chair, and 3 were moved out of bed to the chair. One patient expired, 1 patient remains intubated in ICU, 1 transferred to a rehabilitation facility off the ventilator, and the remaining 8 patients were eventually extubated and transferred out of critical care. Total ventilator days in May 2010 were 243. As compared to the previous months, the data did not support a significant decrease in total ventilator days.

## **Conclusions**

The impact of early activity on ventilator days and overall critical care length of stay was not readily identifiable due to the short study period. Further data collection needs to be performed to determine to benefits, if any, of early activity in the mechanically ventilated patients. Limitations to this study included lack of nursing cooperation with data collection as well as the small number of eligible patients for the study.

## **Key words**

mechanical ventilation, chair rest, physical therapy, physical activity