

**Hypoxic hospitals after happy hypoxia during COVID-19 pandemic**Ankur Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Varuna Vyas<sup>2</sup>, Shilpa Goyal<sup>3</sup>, Nikhil Kothari<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of in Trauma & Emergency (Anesthesiology), All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Rajasthan, India

<sup>2</sup>Department of Pediatrics, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Rajasthan, India

<sup>3</sup>Department of Anesthesia and Critical Care, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Rajasthan, India

**Corresponding Author:** Ankur Sharma**Email:** [ankuranaesthesia@gmail.com](mailto:ankuranaesthesia@gmail.com)**Cite this article as:** Sharma A, Vyas V, Goyal S, Kothari N. Hypoxic hospitals after happy hypoxia during COVID-19 pandemic. *Turk J Anaesthesiol Reanim.* 2021; doi: 10.5152/TJAR.2021.20412

Sir,

The current novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is affecting the global human population, including resource-limited countries. Most patients present with marked arterial hypoxemia but with no corresponding symptoms of respiratory distress. This condition is referred to as a silent or 'happy' hypoxemia (1). In severe cases, death can result from acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and pneumonia.

Supplemental oxygen is the first crucial step for COVID-19 therapy, and appropriate respiratory support is vital for patient survival. In COVID-19 patients, the magnitude of hypoxemia is independently correlated with in-hospital mortality and is a significant indicator of the patient's probability of needing admission to the intensive care unit (ICU) (2).

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Patients suffering from COVID-19 frequently require high-flow oxygen using high flow nasal cannula (HFNC) and ventilators (3,4). Subsequently, oxygen demand started to grow after Covid-19's pandemic, as oxygen is a necessity for these critically ill patients.

There might not be oxygen manifold and pipelines in resource-limited settings and district-level hospitals. In these conditions, oxygen therapy may be given to critically ill patients through oxygen cylinders. Consumption of oxygen from a cylinder relies on fraction of inspired oxygen (FiO<sub>2</sub>), minute ventilation (tidal volume x respiratory rate), compliance of the lungs, inspiratory: expiratory ratio, and configuration of the ventilator. If a patient on HFNC consumes 60 liters per minute of 100 percent oxygen, it would be 3,600 liters of oxygen needed per hour. It indicates that the medical oxygen demand of a critical Covid-19 patient is approximately 86,000 liters per day (3600 X 24 = 86,400) on a high flow nasal cannula.

To use these cylinders, one should know the period over which the cylinder would last. The following example can be used to measure the amount of time an oxygen cylinder will supply oxygen to a critically ill patient. If oxygen consumption is 60 liters per minute and the FiO<sub>2</sub> is 100%, the H type cylinder (5) can last for 6900/60, i.e., 115 minutes or only 1.91 hours. It indicates that oxygen cylinders should be available in adequate quantities.

To conclude, in resource-poor settings, adequate oxygen is necessary for managing severe COVID-19 patients with hypoxemia. As coronavirus cases increase rapidly, these regions have been impacted by a substantial medical oxygen supply shortage.

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All hospitals with COVID-19 patients must ensure the availability of appropriate oxygen supply.

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