European Respiratory Society  
Annual Congress 2013

Abstract Number: 1486  
Publication Number: P1864

Abstract Group: 1.1. Clinical Problems  
Keyword 1: Hypoxia  Keyword 2: Oxygen therapy  Keyword 3: COPD - management

Title: COPD and air travel: Does hypoxia-altitude simulation test predict in-flight respiratory symptoms?

Mrs. Anne 5072 Edvardsen anne.edvardsen@glittreklinikken.no 1, Dr. Morten 5073 Ryg morten.ryg@glittreklinikken.no 1, Dr. Aina 5074 Akerø UXAI B L@ous-hf.no MD 2, Dr. Carl Christian 5075 Christensen ca.chris@online.no MD 1 and Prof. Dr Ole Henning 5076 Skjønsberg o.h.skjonsberg@medisin.uio.no MD 2. 1 Dep. of Respiratory Physiology, Glittreklinikken, Hakadal, Norway, 1485 and 2 Dep. of Pulmonary Medicine, Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway, 0424.

Body: The reduced pressure in the aircraft cabin may cause significant hypoxaemia and respiratory symptoms in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The current study evaluated whether there is a relationship between hypoxaemia obtained during hypoxia-altitude simulation testing (HAST), simulating 2438 m altitude, and the reporting of respiratory symptoms during air travel. Eighty-two patients with moderate to very severe COPD answered an air travel questionnaire. Arterial oxygen pressures during HAST (\(\text{PaO}_2\) HAST) in subjects with and without in-flight respiratory symptoms were compared. The same questionnaire was answered within one year after the HAST. Mean \(\text{PaO}_2\) HAST was 6.3 (0.6) kPa, and 62 (76%) of the patients had \(\text{PaO}_2\) HAST <6.6 kPa. Thirty-eight patients (46%) had experienced respiratory symptoms during air travel. There was no difference in \(\text{PaO}_2\) HAST in those with and those without in-flight respiratory symptoms (6.3 (0.7) kPa vs. 6.3 (0.6) kPa, respectively, \(p=0.93\)). Fifty-four patients (66%) travelled by air after the HAST, and patients equipped with supplemental oxygen (n=23, 41%) reported less respiratory symptoms when flying with than without such treatment (4 (17%) vs. 11 (48%), \(p=0.04\)). In conclusion, no difference in \(\text{PaO}_2\) HAST was found between COPD patients with and without respiratory symptoms during air travel.