Clinical relevance of lung transplantation for COVID-19 ARDS: a nationwide study

Christian Lang1, Valentin Ritschl2,3, Florian Augustin4, Gyoergy Lang1, Bernhard Moser1, Shahrokh Taghavi1, Gabriella Murakoezy1, Christopher Lambers5, Holger Flick6, Markus Koestenberger7, Roxane Brooks8, Tina Muhr9, Johann Knotzer10, Daniel Mydza11, Marc Kaufmann12, Thomas Staudinger13, Christian Zauner14, Claus Krenn15, Eva Schaden15,16, Andreas Bacher17, Bernhard Rössler18, Peter Faybik19, Edda Tschernko20, Maria Anwar20, Klaus Marksteller21, Daniel Hoefer22, Tanja Stamm2,3, Peter Jaksch1 and Konrad Hoetzenecker1

1Dept of Thoracic Surgery, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 2Section for Outcomes Research, Center for Medical Statistics, Informatics and Intelligent Systems, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 3Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Arthritis and Rehabilitation, Vienna, Austria. 4Dept of Visceral, Transplant and Thoracic Surgery, Medical University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria. 5Dept of Pneumology, Ordensklinikum Linz Elisabethinen Hospital, Linz, Austria. 6Division of Pulmonology, Medical University of Graz, Graz, Austria. 7Dept of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care, Klinikum Klagenfurt am Wörthersee, Klagenfurt am Wörthersee, Austria. 8Intensive Care Unit 1, Clinic of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine, Johannes Kepler University Linz, Linz, Austria. 9Intensive Care Unit, Division of Cardiology, Dept of Internal Medicine, State Hospital (LKH) Graz II, Graz, Austria. 10Dept of Anaesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine, Klinikum Wels – Grieskirchen, Wels, Austria. 111st Medical Dept, Klinik Favoriten, Vienna, Austria. 12Dept of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Unit, Bozen Central Hospital, Bozen, Italy. 13Intensive Care Unit 13I, Dept of Internal Medicine I, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 14Intensive Care Unit 13H1, Dept of Internal Medicine III, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 15Intensive Care Unit 13C1, Dept of Anaesthesiology, Intensive Care Medicine and Pain Medicine, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 16Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Digital Health and Patient Safety (LBI-DHPS), Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 17Intensive Care Unit 13C2, Dept of Anaesthesiology, Intensive Care Medicine and Pain Medicine, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 18Intensive Care Unit 13C3, Dept of Anaesthesiology, Intensive Care Medicine and Pain Medicine, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 19Division of Cardiac, Thoracic and Vascular Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 20Dept of Anaesthesiology, Intensive Care Medicine and Pain Medicine, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. 21Dept of Cardiac Surgery, Medical University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria.

Corresponding author: Konrad Hoetzenecker (konrad.hoetzenecker@meduniwien.ac.at)

Shareable abstract (@ERSpublications)
Lung transplantation offers excellent midterm outcomes and should be incorporated in the treatment algorithm of post-COVID-19 ARDS patients https://bit.ly/33Djghz


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Abstract

Background Although the number of lung transplantations (LTx) performed worldwide for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)-induced acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) is still low, there is general agreement that this treatment can save a subgroup of the most severely ill patients with irreversible lung damage. However, the true proportion of patients eligible for LTx, the overall outcome and the impact of LTx on the pandemic are unknown.

Methods A retrospective analysis was performed using a nationwide registry of hospitalised patients with confirmed severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus type 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection admitted between 1 January 2020 and 30 May 2021 in Austria. Patients referred to one of the two Austrian LTx centres were analysed, and grouped into patients accepted and rejected for LTx. Detailed outcome analysis was performed for all patients who received a LTx for post-COVID-19 ARDS and compared with patients who underwent LTx for other indications.

Results Between 1 January 2020 and 30 May 2021, 39,485 patients were hospitalised for COVID-19 in Austria. 2323 required mechanical ventilation and 183 received extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) support. 106 patients with severe COVID-19 ARDS were referred for LTx. Of these, 19 (18%)
underwent LTx. 30-day mortality after LTx was 0% for COVID-19 ARDS transplant recipients. At a median follow-up of 134 (47–450) days, 14 out of 19 patients were alive. **Conclusions** Early referral of ECMO patients to a LTx centre is pivotal in order to select patients eligible for LTx. Transplantation offers excellent midterm outcomes and should be incorporated in the treatment algorithm of post-COVID-19 ARDS.