

Predicting the need for urgent intubation in a surgical/trauma intensive care unit

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Background. Analysis and modeling of data monitoring vital signs and waveforms in patients in a surgical/trauma intensive care unit (STICU) may allow for early identification and treatment of patients with evolving respiratory failure.

Methods. Between February 2011 and March 2012, data of vital signs and waveforms for STICU patients were collected. Every-15-minute calculations ($n = 172,326$) of means and standard deviations of heart rate (HR), respiratory rate (RR), pulse-oxygen saturation (SpO_2), cross-correlation coefficients, and cross-sample entropy for HR-RR, RR- SpO_2 , and HR- SpO_2 , and cardiorespiratory coupling were calculated. Urgent intubations were recorded. Univariate analyses were performed for the periods <24 and ≥ 24 hours before intubation. Multivariate predictive models for the risk of unplanned intubation were developed and validated internally by subsequent sample and bootstrapping techniques.

Results. Fifty unplanned intubations (41 patients) were identified from 798 STICU patients. The optimal multivariate predictive model (HR, RR, and SpO_2 means, and RR- SpO_2 correlation coefficient) had a receiving operating characteristic (ROC) area of 0.770 (95% confidence interval [CI], 0.712–0.841). For this model, relative risks of intubation in the next 24 hours for the lowest and highest quintiles were 0.20 and 2.95, respectively (15-fold increase, baseline risk 1.46%). Adding age and days since previous extubation to this model increased ROC area to 0.865 (95% CI, 0.821–0.910).

Conclusion. Among STICU patients, a multivariate model predicted increases in risk of intubation in the following 24 hours based on vital sign data available currently on bedside monitors. Further refinement could allow for earlier detection of respiratory decompensation and intervention to decrease preventable morbidity and mortality in surgical/trauma patients. (*Surgery* 2013;154:1110-6.)

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COMPLEX ANALYSIS OF VITAL SIGNS to predict outcomes for a given patient population is appealing and intuitive. Heart rate (HR) variability (HRV), for example, is a well-known index of illness and a predictor of death in trauma patients.¹⁻³ In addition, decreased HRV is seen as physiologic

reserve is depleted and patients approach exhaustion.³ Although predictors of mortality allow physicians to quantify the severity of a patient's injuries, they do not guide moment-to-moment decisions regarding patient management. The use of the HeRO (Heart Rate Observation) score in neonates^{4,5} provides a precedent for directing an intervention (in this case, diagnosis and treatment of sepsis) based on a score developed from a complex analysis of vital signs data. A recent, large, randomized trial showed that display of the HeRO score was associated with decreased mortality of very low birth weight infants in the neonatal intensive care unit (ICU) by $>20\%$.⁵

We hypothesized that a similar approach might aid in early detection of respiratory decompensation leading to urgent, unplanned intubation. The sequelae of intubation in an ICU population

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are clinically important. Ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) is associated with prolonged durations of ICU and hospital stays, increased costs, and increased mortality.⁶⁻¹⁰ The incidence of VAP is greater in patients who are ventilator-dependent for greater periods of time,^{6,7,9,11-13} and reintubation is associated independently with the development of VAP.^{6,7,11,14} In addition, the need for an urgent intubation is associated with a greater risk of VAP than elective intubation, perhaps owing to the increased risk of aspiration of gastric contents during less than ideal conditions.¹⁴

Therefore, identifying patients with progressive respiratory decompensation at an earlier stage has the potential to prevent intubations or, at the least, convert an urgent intubation to a more controlled, elective intubation, thereby decreasing some of the associated morbidity. Similar to the association of decreased HRV with mortality, measures of HRV are better predictors of prolonged ventilation than mean or median HR.¹⁵ The aim of this study was to assess complex vital sign analyses for patients who required urgent intubation in a surgical/trauma population for the 24 hours preceding an intubation event to determine whether changes in vital sign and wave form data might allow for earlier identification of evolving respiratory failure in these patients.

METHODS

This study was undertaken in a tertiary-care, level 1 trauma center with a 15-bed combined surgical/trauma ICU (STICU). All patients are managed by a team of board-certified surgical intensivists, residents, and nurse practitioners.

The bedside monitors in all STICU rooms are connected to a BedMasterEx patient monitoring system (Excel Medical, Jupiter, Fla) that records vital signs and waveform data, allowing data to be downloaded and warehoused daily on a custom grid computing cluster.¹⁶ Stored data include a coded timestamp and bed assignment, and data are linked to medical record information stored in the Clinical Data Repository to reunite physiologic data with clinical information. These data points include HR, respiratory rate (RR), invasive and noninvasive blood pressure measurements, and pulse oximeter saturation reading (SpO₂), reported by the monitor every 2 seconds. All analyses were done in MatLab. We have devised and validated multivariable logistic regression modeling previously using our own scripts.¹⁷

From February 2011 through January 2012, unplanned, urgent intubation events occurring for surgery patients within the STICU were

collected prospectively and recorded via daily systematic review of the "Adult Ventilator Template" in the electronic medical record (Epic Systems Corporation, Verona, Wisc), with confirmation by ICU in the notes of attending physicians. In addition, a prospective log of all patients on the general surgery, trauma, emergency general surgery, transplant, or vascular services was maintained. Patients on ancillary services, including urology, otolaryngology, obstetrics, or plastic surgery, were not included in either event capture or vital signs data collection.

The date, time, and relevant circumstances for the intubation event were recorded. In addition, extubation events were recorded to distinguish between reintubation (defined as return to invasive mechanical ventilation greater than 24 hours from prior extubation) and failed extubation (defined as return to invasive mechanical ventilation within less than 24 hours after extubation). Patients intubated electively for a procedure or operation and extubated in the operating room or postanesthesia care unit at the conclusion of the case were not considered to have been intubated or mechanically ventilated previously. If a patient received a tracheostomy, an extubation event was considered the time of liberation from the ventilator once a patient had completed a 24-hour period free of mechanical support. If the patient required mechanical ventilatory support via the tracheostomy after that 24-hour period, it was recorded as a reintubation event. We considered all nonelective intubations to be urgent and unplanned.

Mean values and standard deviations of vital signs (HR, RR, SpO₂) were calculated every 15 minutes as based on the previous 30 minutes of data, resulting in 96 measurements per day. Joint vital signs included the maximum cross-correlation coefficient and the cross-sample entropy (SampEn, a measure of time-series complexity) of HR-RR, RR-SpO₂, and HR-SpO₂ pairs.^{18,19} Cardiorespiratory coupling was measured using phase-based analysis.¹⁶ Clinical parameters analyzed were age, days since previous extubation, and duration of ICU stay. If a patient had not been intubated previously, a conservative maximum value of 25 days was used for days since extubation for modeling purposes, because it was greater than any value for the previously intubated patients.

Binary logistic regression models were developed by labeling observations during the 24 hours before the event as "one," and observations outside this timeframe as "zero." Because features were calculated every 15 minutes, there were many

inputs per patient and event. The significance of the model coefficients was adjusted for these repeated measures using the Huber-White method to modify the variance-covariance matrix from the maximum likelihood logistic regression fit.^{20,21} This approach corrects both for unequal variances and correlated responses from individual patients. More specifically, estimates of regression coefficients and other parameters of the model are obtained in standard fashion, but the *P*s are corrected using the "sandwich" estimator of standard errors.²²

The predictive model for intubation was validated internally via two methods. First, a subsequent sample analysis of separate training and test populations was performed. An initial model was developed in a training population before the availability of the test set data. Inputs included vital sign features, age, and days since extubation. Inputs included vital sign features, age, and days since extubation. The performance of this model was then assessed on both the original and subsequent data sets. A second validation utilizing a bootstrapping method was also performed.²³ For this method, 1,000 random samples of 798 patients taken with replacement were analyzed. Confidence intervals (CIs) for the receiving operating characteristic (ROC) areas were obtained from the 1,000 samples with limits set at the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles of the sampling distributions.

RESULTS

From February 22, 2011, through January 11, 2012, 873 patient admissions (798 patients) to the STICU met the inclusion criteria above. Demographics are included in Table I. During this period, 50 unplanned, urgent intubations occurred in 41 patients. Interobserver agreement for events was high, with a Cohen kappa of 0.9, as expected from the standardized use of the electronic health record. These included 18 intubations in patients not intubated previously during that admission, 21 reintubations, and 11 failed extubations. Of these, 1 patient had a tracheostomy and required a return to mechanical ventilation after liberation for >24 hours. Those patients requiring intubation differed from those who did not require intubation by ICU duration of stay and incidence of ICU-acquired pneumonia.

The data analyzed included 172,326 observations of 15-minute interval data for nonintubated patients in the STICU, which translates to 1,795 patient days of data. For the patients requiring intubation, there were 2,523 observations, or

Table I. Demographics

	Intubations (n = 41)	Non-intubations (n = 757)	P value
Age	63.3 ± 3.1	55.2 ± 0.7	.0090*
ICU duration of stay	12.8 ± 1.6	4.0 ± 0.2	<.0001
Trauma patient	21 (51%)	387 (51%)	NS†
ICU-acquired pneumonia	16 (39%)	43 (6%)	<.0001

*Independent samples *t* test.

†Chi square test.

ICU, Intensive care unit; NS, not significant.

26 patient days. The overall incidence rate for unplanned intubation in the succeeding 24 hours was 1.46% (2,523 divided by 172,326 observations).

Individual vital signs, joint measurements of vital signs, and clinical parameters were assessed by univariate analyses to determine the independent impact of each on unplanned intubations (Fig 1). Increased risk of requiring intubation in the next 24 hours was associated with increasing HR and RR and decreasing SpO₂ (*P* < .0005; Fig 1, top panel), decreasing correlation of RR-SpO₂ (*P* < .0001; Fig 1, middle panel), and increased age and arterial partial pressure of oxygen (PaO₂; *P* < .022; Fig 1, bottom panel; Table II). Increasing white blood cell count, increasing HR-RR cross-entropy, and decreasing cardiorespiratory coupling also were not associated with increased risk. In addition, the duration of ICU stay at time of intubation and the time since prior extubation were assessed (Table II). Although the overall time in the ICU was not predictive (*P* = .86), time since extubation was significant, with a 2.5-fold increased risk in the first 24–48 hours after extubation (*P* < .0001; Fig 1). Variables that were significant in the univariate analysis were advanced as candidates in the multivariable analysis.

The predictive models were developed and validated internally using two methods. The model was validated on a separate test data set consisting of 209 patients admitted to the STICU from April 17, 2012, to August 07, 2012, where 20 unplanned intubations were identified in 19 patients. The vital signs only model was calculated every 15 minutes in unventilated patients totaling 42,022 observations (438 days). The ROC area for predicting episodes <24 hours before the event was 0.729 which was within the 95% CI estimated from the training set.

For the second, we utilized the bootstrapping technique.²³ The predictive model analyzing all 50 intubation events with inclusion of individual and joint measures of vital sign had a ROC curve

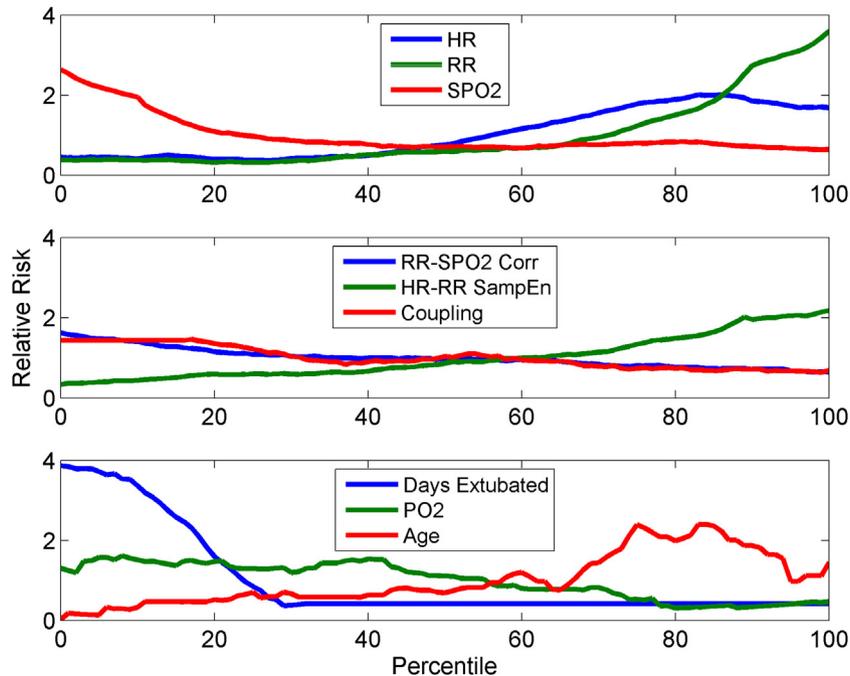


Fig 1. Relationship between individual and joint vital sign calculations and selected clinical variables to the relative risk of intubation.

Table II. P values and ROC areas for univariate analyses of individual and joint vital signs and clinical parameters assessed

	P value	ROC area
HR	.0005	0.664
RR	<.0001	0.743
SpO ₂	.0004	0.613
RR-SpO ₂ correlation	<.0001	0.571
HR-RR sample entropy	.172	0.654
Cardiorespiratory coupling	.26	0.573
White blood cell count	.052	0.596
Partial pressure of oxygen	.022	0.618
Age	.0042	0.660
Days since extubation	<.0001	0.742
Days in STICU	.90	0.480

HR, Heart rate; RR, respiratory rate; SpO₂, pulse oxygen saturation; STICU, surgical/trauma intensive care unit.

area of 0.770 (95% CI, 0.712–0.841). There was a sharp increase in relative risk for the upper quintile, with a 15-fold overall increased risk from the lowest (0.20) to highest quintiles (2.95) for the vital sign model. Adding the clinical features of age and time since extubation increased the ROC curve area to an even greater value of 0.865 (95% CI, 0.821–0.910; Fig 2). The relative risk for the lower quintile was 0.006 and for the upper quintile was 3.87. The full model parameters are presented in Table III.

To assess the model’s performance before the time of intubation, the model of vital signs was performed on sliding 24-hour windows of available data in one-hour increments. It continued to demonstrate good predictive performance, with ROC curve areas for the vital signs only model of 0.755, 0.737, and 0.712 at –2, –6, and –12 hours, respectively. Thus, even vital signs collected from 6 to 12 hours before intubation were acceptable predictors of intubation.

DISCUSSION

The current study evaluated the application of analyses of vital signs and waveforms in a predictive model to assess the risk of urgent, unplanned intubation in the next 24 hours in a population of surgery and trauma intensive care patients. The resulting models demonstrated very good predictive performance in this representative population of nearly 800 patients with 50 urgent intubation events.

Much work has focused on HRV as the complex vital sign measurement of choice in further assessing patient status from bedside monitor data. The notion that organ signaling systems are uncoupled during illness was advanced by Godin and Buchman in 1996,²⁴ and is supported by data suggesting autonomic dysregulation of HR and RR coupling is disrupted in states of infection and inflammation or physiologic exhaustion.^{1-3,25,26}

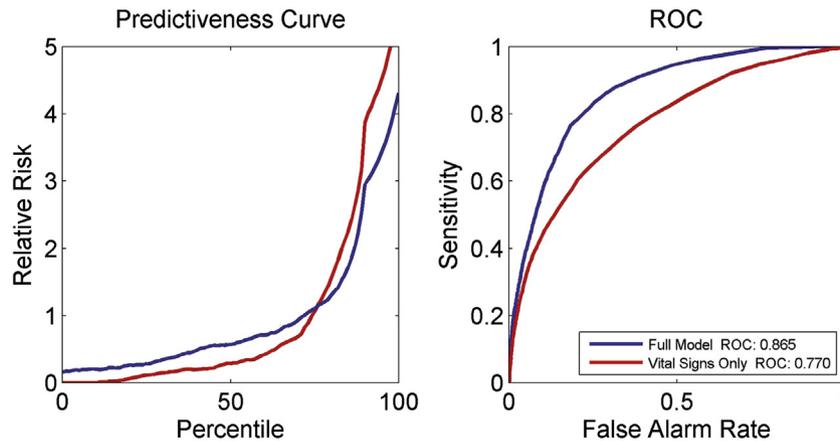


Fig 2. Predictiveness and receiving operating characteristic curves for vital signs only and full model.

Table III. Multivariate analysis for full model

	Coefficient	Wald chi square	P value
Heart rate	0.032 ± 0.01	17.19	.00003
Respiratory rate	0.056 ± 0.01	15.19	.00010
SpO ₂	-0.081 ± 0.02	16.09	.00006
RR-SpO ₂ correlation coefficient	-0.967 ± 0.31	9.69	.0019
Age	0.035 ± 0.01	10.12	.015
Days since extubation	-0.086 ± 0.02	24.25	<.00001

ROC, Receiving operating characteristic; SpO₂, pulse oxygen saturation.

This loss of HRV in response to respiration when the heart and lungs are coupled in health has long been interpreted as a sign of illness.^{2,15,24,26-28} For example, Grogan et al¹ showed that a measure of cardiac volatility-related dysfunction, a 5-minute HRV metric recorded over the initial 24 hours of stay in trauma patients predicts both in-hospital and 30-day mortality with a ROC curve area of 0.81 and sensitivity and specificity of 70.1 and 80.0, respectively.

Norris et al² have shown that this same predictive property extends through the course of the entire ICU stay. In addition, they showed that the pattern of cardiac uncoupling is altered according to the cause of death, with infection causing uncoupling at 6–10 days compared to the early uncoupling seen with multiple organ failure or traumatic brain injury. Multiple measures of physiologic variability can be applied to HR and other time series data obtained from bedside monitors.²⁹ The ability to notice such patterns suggests that data analysis at this level may be able to discriminate between other events as well, such as respiratory failure versus septic shock.

The current data demonstrate the feasibility of a developing an internally validated, predictive

model from complex vital sign analysis in patients requiring urgent, unplanned intubation in a surgical trauma population. The relatively small number of events in this single-center study may limit the ability to generalize these findings, and the specific vital sign parameters may vary in a larger or more diverse patient population. Additionally, although this analysis was restricted to a surgical ICU patient population, there was still heterogeneity among patients with regard to their trauma status. Larger, multicenter studies are required.

The addition of clinical variables improved the performance of the model, as defined by the predictiveness curves and ROC area (Fig 2). The clinical importance of the full model, however, should be interpreted cautiously, because the relative contribution of the days since extubation variable to the model potentially overshadows the more clinically relevant vital sign variables.

The analysis utilized in this study follows the standards set by Moss et al³⁰ based on previous work by Concato et al.³¹ The internal validation via bootstrapping included odds ratios and confidence intervals²³ for the final model. The MatLab analysis scripts have been verified against SAS routines. Additionally, interaction was testing utilizing cross-correlation of the vital signs, although collinearity was not tested explicitly. The goodness of fit was demonstrated by the predictiveness curve and ROC area, and overfitting was avoided by using 8–9 outcomes per variable as recommended.^{23,32} Conformity to linear gradients was analyzed in the univariate predictiveness curve, and univariate significance levels determined inclusion of variables in the multivariate model. Both subsequent samples and bootstrapping techniques were used for internal validation.

The utility of this and similar methods for early detection of subacute and potentially catastrophic illnesses (such as respiratory failure) must be analyzed in the context of the clinician's own suspicion of respiratory decline. If a physician is concerned already about the patient's status owing to overt clinical changes when the vital sign-based algorithm turns positive, then the utility of such a system is limited. If, however, that system reports an increasing risk of respiratory failure before a physician becomes concerned, then intubation may be prevented by initiating preemptive testing (such as chest x-ray and arterial blood gas assay) and interventions (such as increasing oxygen supplementation or other noninvasive ventilatory support measures). Assessment of sliding 24-hour windows of the model provides some indication that changes in vital signs occur well in advance of clinical deterioration but should be validated in a prospective setting.

The broader goal of such predictive monitoring systems is to describe patient trajectories from health to illness in order to identify those patients with reversible illness in subclinical states who would benefit from earlier interventions.³³ An additional and potentially greater value of this methodology lies in monitoring patients on the acute care wards, because those patients tend to have a greater nurse-to-patient ratio and less frequent collection of routine vital signs. This population would benefit greatly from an automated system that alerts clinicians to the early changes associated with respiratory decompensation and provide time for such interventions to be initiated, potentially altering the patient's outcome.

Limitations. Although the results of these investigations are suggestive of real-time clinical utility in predicting clinical adverse events prospectively (in real time) in the same manner that such efficacy has been demonstrated in predicting neonatal sepsis, no such evaluation has been performed yet in adults. In addition, the authors acknowledge that larger studies, external validation, and prospective multicenter trials are needed to make these findings generalizable and useful for clinical decision making.

In conclusion, this clinical and mathematical study demonstrates detectable changes in vital signs in the 24 hours preceding an unplanned intubation event in STICU patients. Internally validated, predictive models based on logistic regression have impressive statistical performance, especially when combined with clinical parameters with ROC area > 0.8. Multicenter, clinical trials are

required to determine whether such monitoring detects changes far enough in advance of clinical suspicion to affect outcomes.

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