Use of the Laryngeal Mask Airway in Very Small Neonates

To the Editor:—Paterson et al. have drawn attention to the potential of the #1 laryngeal mask airway (LMA) for neonatal resuscitation. The authors correctly point out that the #1 is recommended for infants weighing less than 6.5 kg and hint that there is some uncertainty about the lower weight limit for use, an important consideration because low-weight infants commonly require resuscitation. The smallest neonate in their series weighed 2.235 kg, and the authors state that they were unaware of any reports of its use in smaller infants. Although experience of LMA insertion in neonates weighing less than 2.5 kg is limited, I am aware of some recent data that may be of interest.

First, Albersen et al. have reported the successful use of the #1 LMA in six awake premature infants with a weight range of 1.287–2.290 kg to provide brief access to the trachea for administration of surfactant. This group also reported a failed insertion in a 980-g infant. Second, as part of an ongoing trial comparing the LMA with the facemask for neonatal resuscitation, we have used the LMA in seven infants weighing less than 2.5 kg, including three weighing less than 1.5 kg (1.44, 1.2, and 1.08 kg). In all infants, the LMA was easily inserted within 20 s by an individual experienced in the use of the LMA, and normal heart rate and respiration were restored rapidly.

This suggests that #1 LMA can be inserted in infants weighing less than 2.5 kg and that the lower weight limit is approximately 1 kg. Further studies are required to determine success rates in this low-weight group compared with other techniques. In principle, there is no reason why a smaller LMA (#0.5) could not be manufactured if there was a clinical need.

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