

Thursday, March 29, 2007

## EMTs find breathing tool a life saver

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The Courier-Journal

About a month ago, emergency medical technician Tim Donan responded to a call to find a man in cardiac arrest — no heartbeat, no breathing.

In the past, EMTs were limited in how they could help patients breathe when they were in cardiac arrest. Paramedics with special training, can intubate patients, which involves inserting a tube to allow a pathway directly to the lungs.



But because of a new tool all Metro EMS workers have begun using, Donan quickly inserted a tube that blocked the man's esophagus and allowed air to flow into his lungs.

"It worked beautifully," Donan said of the device, called a King Airway. "This is the best thing that I've been given."

The man arrived at the hospital with a heartbeat, but later died, Donan said. The device is basically a small plastic tube and two tiny balloons. It is designed to be inserted into a patient's throat with minimal injury.

Once in place, the balloon is inflated, which blocks the esophagus and ensures that air will pass through the trachea and into the lungs.

Because the esophagus is blocked, there is minimal risk that the patient would aspirate blood, vomit or other fluid into the lungs, which could be potentially deadly.

"This allows us to quickly and very simply guarantee that we have an airway secured," said Maj. Todd Early, director of education for EMS. "Without an airway, you have nothing. You have a deceased patient."

Paramedics will continue to intubate patients, but can use the King Airway if conditions make intubation too difficult to do in the field, Richmond said.

The device is used by a few other smaller EMS services, Richmond said, but it is not widely used.

It costs about \$78 to outfit each employee with a kit that includes three sizes of the device. Costs are covered out of the general supply budget of EMS, said Matt Kamer, a city spokesman.

Dr. Neal Richmond, director of Metro EMS, said the device can save lives. “We really think it will make a difference,” Richmond said.

Donan, an EMT for 24 years and the first to use the King Airway on a patient, agrees.

“With EMTs being able to use this tool, we’re giving more patients a chance of survival,” Donan said. “It’s quicker. It’s much easier to insert. It’s an awesome device.”



On average, Metro EMS handles about three cases of cardiac arrest each day.

Providers say they expect this device will get a lot of use in the field.

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