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The Distinctive Conditions of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation on Commercial Flights

Специфичности кардиопулмоналне реанимације током комерцијалних
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The Distinctive Conditions of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation on Commercial Flights

Специфичности кардиопулмоналне реанимације током комерцијалних летова

The article entitled “Is there a doctor on the plane? The Distinctive Conditions of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation on Commercial Flights” [1] represents an extremely interesting and systematic review of measures and procedures in dealing emergency situations, especially performing cardio pulmonary resuscitation during commercial flights by airplane. Each medical worker has probably considered the fact of being responsible in case one of the passengers doesn't feel well or even experience acute heart arrest. A responsible medical worker before reading this article would have a dilemma if he would even manage in this specific situation, with many difficult circumstances: tight airplane space, high altitude and without any previous information about patient health condition, his/her chronic diseases, habits, medicaments eventually used, as well as information about the equipment for basic and advanced measures of life saving- cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in airplane and necessary knowledge of cabin crew. This situation begins more complex when adding other problem as inexistence of unique national and international guides for reacting in this kind of situations.

In its latest recommendations dating from October 2015, European Resuscitation Council proposed guidelines for performing CPR in plane as demonstrated in this article. Knowing these guidelines can resolve many dilemmas which medical workers have while flying on commercial flights- from the moment the guest reported crew for using professional help, knowing all necessary equipment, educating cabin crew in CPR performance, until the medical recommendations and pilot decision to land the plane in order to have professional consultations with medical teams on the ground [2].

However, international standardization in terms of equipment and medicines necessary for providing emergency help haven't been established yet, neither the obligation which the passenger who is professional medical worker has on the plane.

In United States each plane on commercial flight having more than 12 seats must have the CPR equipment. The European countries don't have unique regulations in this equipment but it depends from countries and internal procedures of every air company.

The interesting fact demonstrated by article authors is that passengers who are doctors in United States, Canada and Great Britain do not have legal obligation to provide help on demand of cabin crew. However, in European Union and Australia a doctor has a legal obligation to assure emergency help to passenger in life-treating situation [3].

In Serbia, there is a Rulebook on public air transportation and noncommercial flight as well as Code of Professional Ethics of Serbian Medical Chamber, also mentioned by authors and these documents give some guidelines of conducting in this type of situations.

The inexistence of standardized protocols, international regulations and central records mostly complicate data review and access about providing first aid during commercial flights. Consequently, the frequency of these accidents is very hard to establish thus making difficult epidemiological research covering this topic. Professional literature demonstrates particular cases of performing CPR during commercial flights by planes. On the other hand and unfortunately, we receive this kind of information through daily news and medias without any competent explanations. When I got this paper for review, a really dramatic situation was happening in the Belgrade sky when one passenger (who finished his First aid training) succeeded to reanimate the other passenger who had cardiac arrest during airplane flight. The airplane landed on Belgrade airport and physicians of Emergency room and Department of Emergency of the Clinical Center of Serbia had success in further procedures aimed at saving patient's life who eventually left the hospital five days later, fully recovered and without any neurological damages [4].

I have read the article "Is there a doctor on the plane? The Distinctive Conditions of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation on Commercial Flights" in one breath because it gives great inspiration as well as clear and picturesque explanations, practical advices and professional information how to behave in this specific situations thus demonstrating important role and responsibility of doctors in the plane who can help pilot in critical setting to bring the decision about plane landing or flight continuation. The named paper could serve as a basis to create national guides in this area. Multiple national guides could be established also as unique (international) guides who would satisfy completely all medical, ethical and legal dilemmas of physicians as passengers in the plane.

I must express my gratitude to the authors of this paper on excellent handling of this interesting and life-meaning topic, with the hope that it will inspire further research and reflections.

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