

## INTRODUCTION

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Emergency medical admissions constitute a substantial proportion of the workload of the respiratory and cardiology wards, and of the emergency departments. Mortality among these patients is significant and may be determined by the quality of care provided. According to the risk stratification of the patients, the mortality rate may vary from 1% to >30%. Interestingly enough, among the numerous variables associated with in-hospital mortality, two of the most powerful independent predictors are respiratory rate and oxygen saturation, suggesting that the respiratory system is very often involved either as a primary trigger of the emergency or as a secondary target of another organ's acute dysfunction.

Most pulmonologists or intensivists, when asked about what they consider to be a respiratory emergency, are likely to suggest the occurrence of acute respiratory failure, either "purely hypoxic" or hypercapnic.

It follows that the main causes of acute respiratory problems are considered to be an exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or a restrictive disease, pulmonary infections, acute respiratory distress syndrome and cardiogenic pulmonary oedema. Consequently, the larger part of books, monographs and reviews on acute respiratory problems deal with these specific topics.

However, in our daily practice, we have to face other important, although less frequent, respiratory emergencies, such as haemoptysis, ingestion of foreign bodies, pneumothorax, drowning and inhalation injury. Indeed, some peculiar aspects, such as paediatric respiratory emergencies and the occurrence of respiratory failure during pregnancy, are very seldom assessed if they are not covered in specific publications.

The idea of this Monograph, published by the European Respiratory Society, was to fill this gap, giving the readers the opportunity to have a complete overview of the respiratory emergencies that account for ~20–30% of all the emergency admissions to hospital.

The guest editors have asked international experts to not only write an up-to-date review of their specialist subject, but also, when feasible, to give some personal insights based on their long experience in the field.

A great amount of effort has been put in by everyone involved in the project, from the publishers to the authors. Have we succeeded? The answer is down to the readers!