Etomidate and rapid sequence intubation

To the editor:

Etomidate offers the most favourable safety profile of currently available induction agents for emergency department (ED) rapid sequence intubation (RSI).1,2 Although it is effective and widely used in the US, there are few reports of its use in Canadian EDs, largely because it is not currently available on the Canadian market.

Lions Gate Hospital is a 240-bed community hospital and trauma receiving centre in North Vancouver, BC, that has 45 000 ED visits per annum. We recently reviewed our 3-year etomidate experience, documenting intubation success, hemodynamic changes, adverse effects and ED staff satisfaction. Between Nov. 15, 2001, and Oct. 15, 2004, we used etomidate in 169 RSIs, with a 100% intubation success rate. The most common side effects were myoclonus (occurring in 7 [4.1%] patients) and vomiting (1 [0.6%] patient). ED staff reported a high level of satisfaction.

Etomidate is a safe and effective induction agent for RSI in the ED. Its use should be expanded in Canadian community hospitals. Etomidate can be obtained through Health Canada’s Special Access Program at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb-dgps/therapeut/htmleng/edrp.html.

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References