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## Factors associated with blocked tracheal tubes

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Sir: I read with interest the brief report of Kapadia et al. [1] about airway accidents in intubated patients. Their principal conclusion is an increasing trend in the incidence of blocked tracheal tubes with an increased duration of heat and moisture exchange filters (HMF). In our unit we first used the Humid-vent filter and later changed to the Pall filter (Pall, Porthmouth, UK). We then observed an increase in the frequency of blocked tubes associated with the necessity of saline lavage prior to suctioning. We now

use the Intersurgical Clear Therm (Intersurgical, Wokingham UK), and since the change nurses do not require such lavage. The efficacy of the two HMF used in the ICU should therefore also be taken into account. Humidification provided by the HMF BB 22-15 is less [2, 3] than that of the Intersurgical Clear Therm (approx. 23 g/l vs. 28–33 g/l according to  $V_T$  from the manufacturers' data). It would probably be interesting to investigate the HMF used during the two periods and to examine the correlation between blocked tracheal tubes and HMF type.

### References

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