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A High-Risk Endotracheal Tube Exchanger

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To the Editor:

The Cook Airway Exchange Catheter (Cook Inc., Bloomington, IN) has been shown to be a useful and well-tolerated device (1). However, these catheters tend to be significantly flexible. Thus, there is a potential for them to bend inappropriately. Airway management, during endotracheal tube exchanges, could then be compromised. This is especially important for patients with edematous or otherwise “difficult airways” in whom a more rigid tube exchanger could reduce the risk of an airway mishap.

The JEM 400 Endotracheal Tube Changer (Instrumentation Industries Inc., Bethel Park, PA) is hollow (Figure 1), with an inside diameter of 4.3 mm, and is significantly more rigid than the Cook Airway Exchange Catheter. Both devices have extremely smooth outer surfaces, which facilitate their use. However, the unmodified JEM 400 cannot be used for jet ventilation purposes.

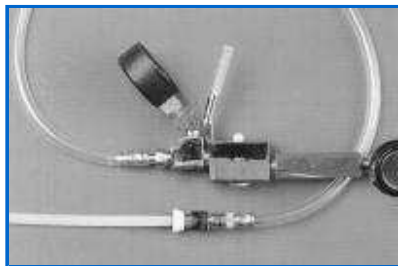


Figure 1. A Cook Rapi-Fit™ jet ventilation adapter may be placed onto a rigid JEM 400 Endotracheal Tube Changer.

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The jet ventilation (Rapi-Fit™) adapter, from the large 3.4-mm inside diameter Cook Airway Exchange Catheter (Cook Airway Exchange Catheter, part number C-CAE-19.0-83), can be readily attached onto a JEM 400 endotracheal tube changer (Figure 2). The benefits of jet ventilation are then incorporated into the JEM 400. This is illustrated in the accompanying figures. Used in this circumstance, the adapter retains its ability to be easily attached and reattached. Therefore, endotracheal tube exchanging can still be accomplished.



Figure 2. Close-up view of adapter.

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With an outside diameter of 6.35 mm, and with its significant rigidity, the JEM 400 would not be tolerated, in awake patients, as is the Cook Airway Exchange Catheter.

Nevertheless, both the increased rigidity and the ability for jet ventilation make this “combined device” an improved endotracheal tube exchanger for sedated or anesthetized patients who have high-risk airway anatomy.

Glen Atlas, MD

Reference

1. Atlas G, Mort T. Extubation of the difficult airway over an airway exchange catheter: relationship of catheter size and patient tolerance [abstract]. Crit Care Med 1999; 27: A57. [Ovid Full Text](#) | [\[Context Link\]](#)

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