

Transcript Details

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Views on Ventilators for COVID-19 Patients

Dr. Turck:

Coming to you from the ReachMD Studios, this is *COVID-19: On the Frontlines*. I'm Dr. Charles Turck, and this is a brief news summary on why some healthcare professionals are moving away from using ventilators for COVID-19 patients, as reported by NBC.

Against the backdrop of a global push to get more ventilators and other critical gear into the hands of U.S. healthcare professionals, some clinicians are actually opting out of using ventilators to treat their COVID-19 patients, as several hospitals have reported unusually high death rates.

Studies show that 40 to 50 percent of patients with severe acute respiratory distress syndrome die while on ventilators – but that percentage doubles to 80 percent in COVID-19 patients, according to New York City officials.

And this isn't just a pattern uniquely experienced by New York. The American Lung Association has stated that high numbers of ventilator-related deaths in COVID-19 patients have been reported across the U.S., with similar reports in China and the United Kingdom.

With reasons still unclear, some speculate the increased risk of death might be linked to a patient's baseline fitness level, the severity of their illness at the time of intubation, or ventilators triggering an adverse immune response. Experts do say ventilators may be damaging to a patient over time as they're sometimes associated with further lung injury, and since patients with Coronavirus tend to be on ventilators for a much longer period of time than otherwise similar patients, those effects may be intensified.

But regardless of the reason, physicians have already begun advocating adopting other measures first, like prone positioning, more oxygen administered via nasal cannula, and nitric oxide to improve blood and oxygen flow to the parts of the lungs that are the least damaged.

One of the leaders in the effort to use nitric oxide to keep patients off ventilators for as long as possible is Dr. Roger Alvarez, a lung specialist with the University of Miami Health System, who said, "The ventilator is not therapeutic. It's a supportive measure while we wait for the patient's body to recover."

But as healthcare providers continue to rely on anecdotal evidence real-time, it remains to be seen whether these treatment alternatives to ventilators result in improved patient outcomes. Visit [NBCNews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com) for the full story.

For ReachMD, this is *COVID-19: On the Frontlines*. And as always, to add your perspectives on the fight against the pandemic, visit us at [ReachMD.com](https://reachmd.com) and become Part of the Knowledge. Thank you for listening.