

Intubation Techniques. Operative Techniques in Otolaryngology

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This is a very nice, succinct review of managing the child with the difficult airway. It is the first article in a monograph dedicated to Sleep Disordered Breathing in Neonates and Toddlers and is therefore aimed at Pediatric Otolaryngologists. The article starts with a basic review of the anatomy in a child that might make intubation challenging (Pierre Robin, Treacher Collins etc. The author reminds the readers that managing the difficult airway in a child is often much more difficult than in an adult. Awake intubation while great in theory is often not possible; percutaneous cricothyrotomy or tracheostomy are rife with their own risks. Sometimes the wisest course is to avoid intubation and proceed with an LMA or other supraglottic airway device.

Dr. Lane introduces the COPUR airway score. Significant anatomical or physiologic variables are given points from 1-4, past history or pertinent medical history are taken into consideration. The more points a child accumulates, the more challenging the airway will probably be.

C= Chin-from the side, how much is it recessed,

O= Opening -space between upper and lower front teeth),

P= Previous intubations, history of OSA,

U= Uvula-how much is visible

R = Range—cervical range of motion

Modifiers include prominent front teeth, very large tongue, macroglossia, extreme obesity or a mucopolysaccharidoses, and can add 1-2 points.

Next the author describes maneuvers to optimize intubation with direct laryngoscopy, including the "BURP" (Backwards, Upwards, Rightward Pressure) technique. Finally several types of different of supraglottic airway devices are reviewed as well as indications for and techniques used with fiberoptic intubation are discussed.

Comment: This is a nice review article with good diagrams to introduce the anesthesia care provider to a simplified approach to the difficult airway in a child. Since this article is aimed at the otolaryngologists there is not a lot of detail on performing specific techniques, however it is worthwhile to look over the COPUR score. It provides a great way to organize one's approach to evaluating a potentially difficult airway.