

Mallampati 'Zero' Airway: Extremely Easy or Not?

Mallampati 'Sıfır' Havayolu: Çok Kolay mı, Değil mi?

Nesil Coşkunfırat, Neval Boztuğ Uz Department of Anaesthesiology and Reanimation, Akdeniz University Hospital, Antalya, Turkey

To the Editor,

An epiglottis that is seen during laryngoscopy is a relief for the anesthetist, but what should one feel if the epiglottis is seen by mouth opening, during Mallampati class examination? Since Ezri suggested to add a new class, 'class zero airway,' to the Mallampati classification (1), there has been a debate whether the epiglottis seen by mouth opening is a sign of 'extremely' easy intubation or not. There are no randomized, controlled studies assessing the ease of intubation of this class; so, prevalence studies and case reports become more important. Nevertheless, the results of them are varied and limited.

We want to present a (another) case of easy intubation with class zero airway and want to emphasize the importance of weight in the prediction of ease of intubation. A 27-year-old female, 47 kg and 163 cm, was admitted for rhinoplasty. Her epiglottis was seen during Mallampati examination (Figure 1), and her Cormack Lehane laryngoscopy grade was I. She was easily intubated in the first attempt.

Tobolt in 1869 was the first to describe that the epiglottis might be seen during mouth opening, but he did not determine its incidence (2). By a literature review, we found 42 easy and 3 difficult intubations reported (Table 1) (3-13). One of the difficult intubations and 15 of the easy intubations were males. Some of the case reports and letters do not even mention the weight of the patients. In these reports, age and gender are more emphasized, but we think that weight is as important as they are.

Table 1. The 'Mallampati zero'cases in the English literature					
	Number of Patients	Age	Gender	Weight/Height (BMI)	Intubation condition
Craig et al. (3)	1	33	F	NS	Easy
Ezri et al. (4)	9	19-38	F	(24±7)	Grade 1
Shastri et al. (5)	1	38	F	55 kg / 170 cm	Grade 2 (Macintosh No.3)
Mahajan et al. (6)	1	48	М	NS	NS
Sakuragi et al. (7)	1	25	М	63 kg/169	Grade 1
Fang et al. (8)	1	69	М	80 kg/ 5' 7"	III (Macintosh No.3) Failed bag-mask ventilation
Grover et al. (9)	1	52/54	F	56 kg	III (Macintosh No.3)
Xie et al. (10)	1	44	F	NS	Could be intubated on the second attempt
Indira (11)	1	40	F	NS	Graded easy by attending anesthetist
Hegde et al. (12)	27	18-65	15F/12M	22.1±5.2	All were 'easy' Grade 1 or 2
Prabhakar et al. (13)	1	35	М	NS	Grade 1
NS: not specified; F: female; M: male					

Address for Correspondence/Yazışma Adresi: Dr. Nesil Coşkunfirat, Department of Anaesthesiology and Reanimation, Akdeniz University Hospital, 07059 Antalya, Turkey Phone: +90 242 249 62 60 E-mail: nesildgr@yahoo.com

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Figure 1. View of Epiglottis in Mallampati Class Zero Airway

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