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Difficulties and issues surrounding extracorporeal membrane oxygenation during the time of COVID: a case series of COVID patients placed on ECMO support

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Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) is a modified cardiopulmonary bypass circuit. It is utilized to be a temporary lung and blood pump to facilitate gas exchange for patients. It is used for the critically ill, when their own lung and/or heart are not able to function. ECMO assists while allowing patient's lung and/or heart to recover. Because of how ECMO functions, it is being considered an artificial life prolonging machine, and has been utilized extremely, during this time of COVID. However, ECMO's benefit is usually time-limited, and the benefit of its use is only when patient has the potential to recover. This presentation will present case series of COVID patients who were placed on ECMO to highlight the difficulties and challenges we were faced with. This presentation will highlight these patient cases and palliative care's involvement, will describe what an ECMO is, and identify criteria for ECMO cannulation. Identify the challenges and ethical issues encountered by the healthcare providers, patients and their families. These case reports will

hopefully help enlighten palliative care providers on how to handle and guide patients and families as they navigate through the patient's journey while on ECMO during this time of the COVID pandemic.

Speaker Biography

Anna Cecilia Sandejas Tenorio is a board-certified family medicine and palliative care and hospice physician. She completed her Family Medicine residency at University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio as a Chief Resident in her final year of training. She also completed her Palliative Care and Hospice fellowship at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX. She is now a palliative care physician at Houston Methodist Hospital in Houston, Texas Medical Center, and serves as an Instructor for the Houston Methodist Academic Institute and an Adjunct Professor for Texas A & M Medical school. She is involved in the numerous committees at Houston Methodist, namely LVAD Council group, ECMO Outcomes Analysis Team and Medical Staff Quality Management. Her primary interests are in academic education, research and quality improvement in palliative care.

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