ORIGINAL

Impact of noninvasive ventilation failure upon patient prognosis. Subanalysis of a multicenter study

M. Delgado a,*, A. Marcos b, A. Tizón c, A. Carrillo d, A. Santos e, B. Balderi f, B. Suberviola g, E. Curiel h, E. Fernández-Mondejar i, R. Fernández a,j,k, on behalf of the Study Group of Sabadell Score

a Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Hospital Sant Joan de Déu, Fundació Althaia, Manresa, Barcelona, Spain
b Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Hospital Virgen de la Concha, Zamora, Spain
c Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Hospital Xeral Cies, Vigo, Spain
d Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Hospital Morales Meseguer, Murcia, Spain
e Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Complexo Hospitalario Universitario de Santiago de Compostela, Spain
f Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Hospital La Fe, Valencia, Spain
gh Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Hospital Universitario Marqués de Valdecilla, Santander, Spain
h Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Hospital Carlos Haya, Málaga, Spain
i Servicio de Medicina Intensiva, Hospital Virgen de las Nieves, Granada, Spain
j CIBERES, Madrid, Spain
k Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain

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Abstract
Objective: Noninvasive ventilation (NIV) constitutes first-line treatment for the exacerbation of obstructive pulmonary disease and cardiogenic lung edema. Several studies suggest that NIV failure could increase the risk of mortality, mainly due to the delay in tracheal intubation. We aimed to evaluate the negative impact of NIV failure in routine practice among Spanish ICUs.

Patients: A subanalysis was made of the multicenter validation of the Sabadell Score study, extracting patients with acute respiratory failure requiring either invasive or noninvasive mechanical ventilation, with the exclusion of patients presenting “do not resuscitate and/or do not intubate” orders.

Variables: We recorded demographic parameters, ICU-specific treatments and the development of acute renal failure or infections during ICU stay. Patients were followed-up on until hospital discharge or death. The statistic analysis included Cox multiple logistic regression.

Results: We analyzed 4132 patients, of whom 1602 (39%) received only invasive mechanical ventilation (IMV), while 529 (13%) received NIV. The latter succeeded in 50% of the patients, but


* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: marcosdelgado1976@gmail.com (M. Delgado).

Annex 1 contains the remaining components of the Study Group of Sabadell Score.

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Impacto del fracaso de la ventilación no invasiva en el pronóstico de los pacientes.
Subanálisis de un estudio multicéntrico

Resumen

Objetivo: La ventilación no invasiva (VNI) constituye la primera línea de tratamiento en las exacerbaciones de la enfermedad pulmonar obstructiva crónica y el edema cardiogénico. Algunos estudios sugieren que el fracaso de la VNI incrementaría el riesgo de mortalidad, principalmente debido al retraso en la intubación. Pretendemos analizar si el fracaso de la VNI se asocia con un peor pronóstico en condiciones de práctica clínica diaria.

Pacientes: Subanálisis del estudio de validación multicéntrico Sabadell Score, analizando los pacientes con insuficiencia respiratoria aguda que requieren ventilación mecánica invasiva (VMI) o VNI, tras excluir los pacientes con limitación terapéutica.


Resultados: Analizamos 4.132 pacientes, de los cuales 1.602 (39%) recibieron solo VMI y 529 (13%) VNI. La VNI fue exitosa en el 50%, y el otro 50% requirió intubación, siendo más frecuente en pacientes neurologicos y postoperatorios. La mortalidad real fue similar a la predicha en los pacientes tratados solo con VMI (27% vs 29%, p = NS), pero inferior en los pacientes tratados con VNI (22% vs 33%, p < 0.001), siendo muy inferior a la predicha en el grupo VNI-exito (12% vs 28%, p < 0.001), y solo ligeramente inferior en el grupo VNI-fracaso (32% vs 38%, p = NS).

Conclusiones: El fracaso de la VNI y la necesidad de intubación no parecen empeorar el pronóstico de los pacientes.

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Introduction

Noninvasive ventilation (NIV) is presently a routine procedure in the management of patients with acute respiratory failure (ARF) secondary to decompensated chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), hypoxia or decompensated congestive heart failure (CHF). Theoretically, NIV is safe and effective in correcting gas exchange and in reducing ventilatory muscle effort–thereby avoiding the need for invasive mechanical ventilation (IMV) and its consequences, such as ventilation associated pneumonia (VAP).

Many studies have demonstrated benefits of NIV in exacerbated COPD and decompensated CHF, as reflected by blood gas correction and a decrease in intubation, mechanical ventilation and mortality. In cases of hypoxemic ARF (pneumonia, adult respiratory distress syndrome, etc.), controversy remains regarding the indications, benefits and results of NIV. However, some studies recommend its utilization in view of the satisfactory results obtained in terms of patient prognosis and a decrease in intubation. Nevertheless, these studies are very heterogeneous in terms of the population groups and number of patients analyzed. This situation points to the need for broader studies in order to draw firm conclusions regarding the possible benefits of the technique, as underscored by the International Consensus Conference in Intensive Care Medicine.

In general, studies on the application of NIV focus on determination of the components needed to ensure effective utilization of the technique (type of interface, ventilator programming, working equipment, etc.). In contrast, other studies, attempting to predict the results, center on the evaluation of factors capable of predicting success or failure of the technique (underlying disease, patient age, severity scales, PaO2/FiO2, PaCO2, etc.). Attempts to predict the effectiveness of NIV are based on the suspicion that a delay in intubation can worsen the patient prognosis in terms of mortality and/or stay in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and in hospital, as has been suggested by some studies.

At present, and under true life clinical conditions outside the strict protocols of clinical trials, the prognosis of patients requiring NIV in Spanish ICUs is not clear. Based on the data obtained from the multicenter Sabadell Score validation study, we have attempted to determine whether failure in applying NIV would worsen the patient prognosis or not.
The primary study objective was to determine whether the success or failure of NIV (avoidance or failure to avoid intubation and IMV) modifies patient survival.

As a secondary objective, we examined whether the success or failure of NIV can be influenced by demographic or pharmacological factors, the development of infections in the ICU or acute renal failure (ARF), and whether it affects ICU and/or hospital stay.

Patients and methods

The multicenter Sabadell Score validation study was carried out in 31 Spanish ICUs over a period of three months (March–May 2008). A total of 4132 patients were analyzed (Fig. 1). On the basis of the original study—the primary objective of which was to validate the Sabadell Score as a predictor of the prognosis of patients discharged from the ICU—in our subanalysis we used the existing data to assess the effect of the routine use of NIV in daily clinical practice in Spanish hospitals. We selected the patients presenting criteria of acute respiratory failure of any origin, and with a need for mechanical ventilation, whether invasive or otherwise. We excluded all cases involving a limitation of therapeutic effort or with a defined "therapeutic ceiling". Different variables were analyzed: patient age, reason for admission, specific ICU treatments (vasoactive drugs, parenteral nutrition, dialysis, and/or tracheostomy), stay in the ICU, and hospital stay. As morbidity parameters we recorded the appearance of acute renal failure and the development of nosocomial infection (respiratory infection, ventilator associated pneumonia (VAP), urinary infection and/or catheter-related bacteremia). Due to the population based approach of the study, with adoption of the "standard treatment" concept, no consensus was established regarding the different diagnoses or definitions—the decisions referred to diagnostic techniques and treatments (weaning, dialysis, etc.) being left to the criterion of the participating physician. As outcome variables we included readmission to the ICU, mortality in the ICU, and hospital mortality. The hospital mortality data recorded in each of the groups (IMV, NIV-success and NIV-failure) were compared with mortality predicted by the severity scale used in the different participating centers (APACHE II, SAPS 2 and SAPS 3 scores).

Statistical analysis

Qualitative variables, expressed as percentages, were compared using the chi-squared test or the Fisher exact test in the case of very small samples. Quantitative variables in turn were expressed as the mean and standard deviation in the presence of a normal distribution, and as the median and interquartile range in the case of a non-uniform distribution or a sample size (n) of less than 20. These variables were compared with the Student t-test for unpaired data, accepting a significance level of p < 0.05. On the other hand, we analyzed the Kaplan–Meier survival distribution for each of the groups (IMV, NIV-failure and NIV-success). Cox multiple logistic regression analysis was used for those variables that might influence patient prognosis (predicted mortality, acute renal failure, use of vasoactive drugs, nosocomial infection). The Epiinfo v.3.5.1 package was used for the statistical analysis (CDC, Atlanta, GA, USA).

Results

Of the 4132 patients registered, 2131 (52%) presented acute respiratory failure and required some type of ventilatory support (Fig. 1). Invasive mechanical ventilation was used from the start in 1602 patients (75%), and NIV in 529 (25%). Among these cases, failure was recorded in 50% and IMV thus proved necessary, while the remaining 50% evolved adequately.

The comparison of IMV and NIV showed the patient age to be younger (61 ± 16 years vs 63 ± 15 years, p = 0.001) and the use of vasoactive drugs greater (63% vs 57%, p < 0.01) in the IMV group (Table 1). However, there were no differences in terms of patient gender (males 67% vs 65%, p = NS), the stay in the ICU (10 ± 13 days vs 11 ± 11 days, p = NS), or in the duration of hospital stay after leaving the ICU (14 ± 20 days vs 15 ± 19 days, p = NS). Likewise, there were no differences between the IMV and NIV groups in terms of the development of acute renal failure, infection acquired in the ICU, or readmission to the ICU. In patients with IMV, the observed mortality was similar to the predicted mortality, while in the NIV group the observed mortality was clearly lower than the predicted mortality (Fig. 2).

The analysis of the NIV group according to the success or failure of the technique is shown in Table 2. There were no differences in either age or gender distribution. However, differences were noted both in the use of vasoactive drugs (74% vs 40%, respectively, p < 0.001) and in infections acquired in the ICU (33% vs 4%, p < 0.001), as well as in acute renal failure (35% vs 21%, p < 0.001) and stay in the ICU (16 ± 14 days vs 6 ± 5 days, p < 0.001). In contrast, neither post-ICU hospital stay (14 ± 17 vs 16 ± 21, p = NS) nor readmission to the ICU (6% vs 6%, p = NS) showed differences. The observed mortality was always lower than the predicted mortality in both groups; in the NIV-success group, the observed mortality was 12% and the predicted mortality was 28% (standardized mortality ratio (SMR) 0.43), while in the NIV-failure group the observed mortality was slightly lower than the predicted mortality (Fig. 2).
lower than the predicted mortality (32% vs 38%, SMR 0.84) (Fig. 2).

The distribution of patients with NIV according to the reason for admission (Fig. 3) was found to be similar for both success and failure in the case of respiratory diseases and traumatisms. However, in the patients with coronary and non-coronary cardiovascular disease, NIV was seen to be more successful—in contrast to the situation seen in postsurgical and neurological patients.

The Kaplan–Meier survival analysis between groups (IMV, NIV-failure and NIV-success) yielded significant differences (log-rank 28.7, p < 0.001, Fig. 4). Survival was clearly greater in the NIV-success group (88%), with no differences between the IMV and NIV-failure groups (73% vs 68%, p = NS).

The Cox logistic regression analysis of these variables is shown in Table 3 and Fig. 5. The need for vasoactive drugs (odds ratio (OR) 3.1), the development of infections in the ICU (OR 1.4), acute renal failure (OR 2) and predicted mortality (OR 1.035) were associated to poorer survival. Lastly, the utilization of NIV was associated to a protective effect (OR 0.6).

**Discussion**

The routine clinical use of NIV in patients with acute respiratory failure, analyzed during a period of three months
Table 3  Cox logistic regression analysis, assessing mortality in the two groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>95%CI</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vasoactive drugs</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.3–4.3</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infection in ICU</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.1–1.8</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute renal failure</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.5–2.5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicted mortality</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>1.03–1.04</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noninvasive ventilation</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5–0.8</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regardless of the type of ventilation used (NIV or IMV). When NIV proved effective, the stay in the ICU was shorter than in cases of failure—though hospital stay remained similar (Table 2). The randomized, prospective study carried out by Conti et al. yielded results very similar to our own, both as regards improvement in patient survival with NIV and as refers to hospital stay. Our study, involving a 10-fold greater number of patients, would offer more reliable evidence of the effectiveness of the technique—while also demonstrating its effectiveness in the context of routine clinical practice. A study of NIV in 123 Spanish centers, conducted in 2005 with objectives very different from those of our study, investigated the proportion of NIV used according to the different disease processes involved. Of the 232 patients subjected to NIV, 76% evolved adequately on the basis of a series of prior inclusion criteria—excluding postsurgical and neurological cases and patients with prior metabolic disturbances, etc. In comparison, our series comprised all subjects requiring NIV, independently of the underlying pathology or origin; as a result, the results are not fully comparable in this sense. Nevertheless, the findings of both studies coincide in that no differences were observed on comparing patients intubated after NIV failure versus those intubated from the start, in terms of mortality in the ICU (47% vs 38%, \( p=0.2 \)) or in hospital (55% vs 43%, \( p=0.1 \)), or in terms of the development of pneumonia (16% vs 18%, \( p=0.7 \)).

When NIV proved successful, our data referred to the development of intra-ICU infections or acute renal failure were also positive. The development of acute renal failure and infections in the ICU was more limited in the NIV-success group, and proved significantly greater in the NIV-failure group. Renal failure could play an additional role in the failure of NIV, while in the case of the infections, the development of ventilator associated pneumonia would play a role, following intubation. The logistic regression analysis showed these to be independent factors multiplying mortality risk.

The analysis of the patients by disease subgroups proved consistent with the findings of earlier studies. The multicenter study published by Antonelli et al. involving NIV in 354 patients with hypoxemic acute respiratory failure, recorded a global failure rate of 30%. The frequency of NIV failure in acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and in pneumonia was 50%, while in decompensated CHF and in pulmonary contusion the failure rate was found to be very low (10% and 18%, respectively). In this same line, Demoule et al., in a multicenter study in French ICUs, compared the utilization of NIV in two periods in 1997 and 2002. The NIV failure rate was close to 45% for a heterogeneous group.
of the factors—a high SAPS score and hypoxemic ARF being
the factors most closely associated to NIV failure. In 2001,
Lasdica et al. 14 analyzed the effect of NIV in hypoxemic
patients involving different etiologies (pneumonias, pancre-
atitis, posturgical patients, sepsis, etc.), after excluding
those with COPD. The authors evaluated 27 patients; of
these, failure occurred in 25%, with a need for intubation.
All the patients in which NIV avoided the need for intuba-
tion survived—in contrast to the failure group, where a fatal
outcome was recorded in all cases. Despite the small size
of this series, NIV was found to be of benefit in the hypox-
emic patients, with improvement of the hemodynamic and
gas exchange parameters. Here again our own findings sup-
port the above data and would indicate that the results
obtained with NIV in routine clinical practice are equivalent
to those obtained in methodologically very controlled and
selected study series. The important severity of the patients
in which NIV was proposed appears to confirm that physi-
cians continue to limit this ventilatory support modality to
truly critical patients, where the effectiveness of the tech-
nique has been more clearly demonstrated. In the review
published by Keenan et al. 6 referred to NIV in hypoxemic
patients, a proportionally greater effect was observed in
more serious patient conditions. In contrast, a possible dele-
terious effect of the technique was suggested in patients
with a very low risk of death.

The meta-analysis conducted by Agarwal et al. 15 evalu-
ated 13 studies comprising 540 patients, comparing the
efficacy of NIV in patients with ALI/ARDS. The percent-
age of patients with NIV who ultimately required intubation
was 48%—the patient series being quite heterogeneous, with
hypoxemia of pulmonary and extrapulmonary origin, and
involving different pathological conditions. In our study,
on examining the group of patients presenting respiratory
causes (Fig. 3), the NIV failure rate was likewise in the order
of 51%—though it must be noted that in our case we made no
distinction between patients with hypoxemic and/or hyper-
capnic etiologies.

NIV in posturgical patients is also subject to controversy.
Chiumello et al. 16 , in an analysis of 29 studies, found both
prophylactic and therapeutic NIV to improve the blood gas
parameters in only 19 studies, while in only 11 did it lead
to a decreased need for intubation. Our study recorded
increased failure of NIV, though the number of patients is
too limited to allow the drawing of conclusions.

Study limitations

The present study is a subanalysis of a previous prospective
study; accordingly, analysis of the efficacy of NIV was not
the primary objective of the initial data.

No separation was made in patients with respiratory
failure between acute hypoxemic disease and exacerbated
COPD; as a result, we are unable to describe how each
respiratory condition responded separately to NIV. Likewise,
since an observational design was involved, the original
study did not protocolize data collection with respect to fac-
tors associated to the prognosis of patients subjected to NIV
(age, PaO 2 /FiO 2 , blood gases, timing of intubation, etc.).
On the other hand, since our patients comprised one-half of
the total patients, their behavior exerted a greater impact
upon the global study series; we therefore described each
disease group separately.

The inclusion criteria, the timing of orotracheal intu-
bation or the application of NIV, the selection of the NIV
or IMV arm, the type of interface used or the ventilation
modality employed were not protocolized; rather, data were
collected in the context of routine clinical practice. Never-
theless, the results of previous protocolized studies coincide
with those of our own study.

Different severity scales were used by the different par-
icipating centers for predicting mortality and comparing
it with the observed mortality. This may be regarded as a
limitation, though the original study 17 compared the three
severity scales (APACHE II, SAPS 2 and SAPS 3) without
observing differences in the estimation of global patient
prognosis. It is important to underscore that this study did
not aim to determine which values of the different severity
scales define a poorer prognosis or risk of NIV failure; rather,
the objective was to estimate expected mortality. In our
study the values referred to observed and predicted mortal-
ity in mechanical ventilation were similar, while observed
mortality proved lower in the case of NIV—a circumstance
which could be related to the protective effect associated
with the noninvasive technique.

We conclude that the use of NIV in routine clinical prac-
tice improves the survival of patients in the ICU, and
that even in the case of NIV failure requiring patient intuba-
tion, the mortality rate remains lower than expected. When
NIV proves successful, the complications and days of stay
in the ICU are moreover reduced.

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on the part of the authors.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Appendix 1. The rest of the members of the Sabadell Score Study Group are

José Felipe Solsona (H. del Mar. Barcelona), Fernando Frut-
tos (H. U. de Getafe. Madrid), Frutos del Nagai (H. Severo
Ochoa. Leganés), Gonzalo Hernández (H. Infanta Sofia.
Madrid), Javier González (H. Clínico U. de Salamanca), José
Manuel Añón (H. Virgen de la Luz. Cuenca), José Manuel
Serrano (H. Reina Sofia. Córdoba), Lluís Cabre (SCIAS H.
de Barcelona), M Isabel Umanar (H. de Cruces. Baracaldo),
M Victoria de la Torre (H. U. Virgen de la Victoria. Málaga),
M. Jesús López-Pueyo (H. General Yagüe. Burgos), M. José
Gutiérrez (H. San Agustín. Aviles), Manuela García (H. Vir-
gen Macarena. Sevilla), María Jesús Gómez (H. Reina Sofia.
Murcia), Pablo Monedero (Clínica U. de Navarra. Pamplona),
Paula Vera (H. Sant Joan. Reus), Pedro Ibáñez (H. Son
Llatzer. Mallorca), Pedro Rascado (H. Juan Canalejo. La
Coruña), Ramón Fernández-Cid (H. Mateu Orfila. Menorca),
Rosa Catalán (Consorci H. de Vic), Susana Altaba (H. G.
de Castellón), Vicente Gómez-Tello (H. Moncloa. Madrid), Vic-
toria Lacueva (H. de Sagunto. Valencia).
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