

Safe for Passengers with Lung Disease to Travel by Air

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Oxygen levels while flying are substantially less than at ground level. Current guidelines for in-flight oxygen levels are sufficient to support the needs of passengers with non-obstructed lung disease. According to two articles published in the Wiley-Blackwell journal, *Respirology*, commercial air travel appears to be safe for patients with lung disease as the current policies for the in-flight oxygen levels and availability of supplemental oxygen can adequately accommodate passenger's needs.

The paper entitled, "Predicting the response to air travel in passengers with non-obstructive lung disease: Are the current guidelines appropriate?" quantified the hypoxaemic, or the blood oxygenation level, response in 14 patients with non-obstructive lung disease during air travel and compares it to the British Thoracic Society (BTS) air travel published guidelines.

"The BTS guideline uses common diagnostic tools to provide a simple oxygen level algorithm to identify patients who may require in-flight oxygen. By using the BTS recommendations, we are able to identify the subjects that needed supplement oxygen during the flight. These findings should add confidence to passengers with pulmonary disorders wishing to travel", said co-author Dr. Paul Kelly from the Respiratory Physiology Laboratory at Christchurch Hospital.

Another paper in the issue, "Airline policy for passengers requiring supplemental in-flight oxygen" examines 54 commercial airlines

servicing Australia and New Zealand to consolidate information on the current airline policies on supplemental in-flight oxygen for passengers with lung disease, as well as its approximate cost to passengers.

While the study confirmed that most airlines can accommodate passengers requiring supplemental oxygen, there was substantial variation in air policies and cost for passengers with lung disease who wish to travel while using supplemental oxygen.

Co-author, Dr. Lutz Beckert, from the Christchurch School of Medicine, University of Otago said, “Passenger with lung disease can use this study as a resource to compare airline policies and find a carrier that best suits their needs. In addition, these findings may also act as a catalyst for air travel providers to consider the development of a standard policy for the industry.”

More information:

The abstract of “Predicting the response to air travel in passengers with non-obstructive lung disease: Are the current guidelines appropriate?” is available at: [www3.interscience.wiley.com/jo ... /122304815/abstract](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/jo.../122304815/abstract)

The abstract of “Airline policy for passengers requiring supplemental in-flight oxygen” is available at: [www3.interscience.wiley.com/jo ... /122304816/abstract](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/jo.../122304816/abstract)

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