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S. G. HERSHEY, M.D., *Editor*

A Respirator Alarm for General Use

TAKESHI SAWA * AND ETSUTARO IKEZONO, M.D.†

Respirator alarms to indicate ventilatory failure have been incorporated in commercially available respirators such as the Bennett MA-1, the Bourns Model LS 104.150, and the Bird respirator, which is equipped with a Minute-tidal-volume meter. The respirator alarms described by Lamont¹ and Wilger² do not respond to respiratory obstruction, because the inspiratory pressure of a pressure-preset respira-

tor does not change even when respiratory obstruction occurs. Unfortunately, the commercially available respirator alarms can be used for particular types of respirators only, and the costs of some alarms are higher than the costs of the respirators.

The inexpensive respirator alarm we have designed (fig. 1) can be used accurately for both volume-preset and pressure-preset respirators simply by turning a selector switch. The alarm has been used during the past two years in the Tokyo Medical and Dental University and has proved to be reliable and useful for both types of respirators.

* Instructor.

† Professor.

Received from the Department of Anesthesia, Tokyo Medical and Dental University, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, Japan.

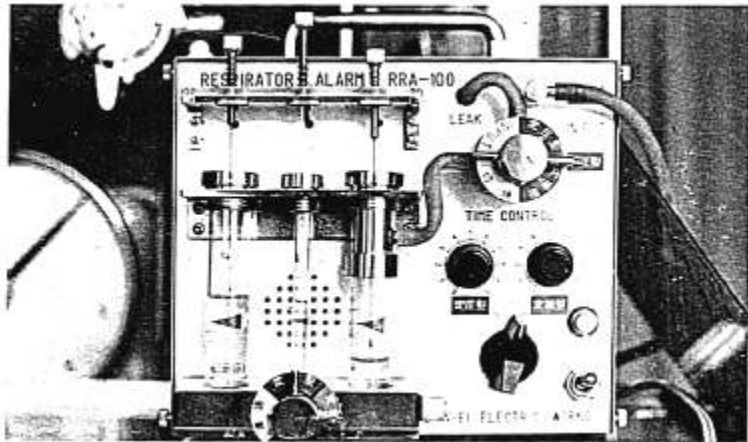


FIG. 1. Front view of the respirator alarm.

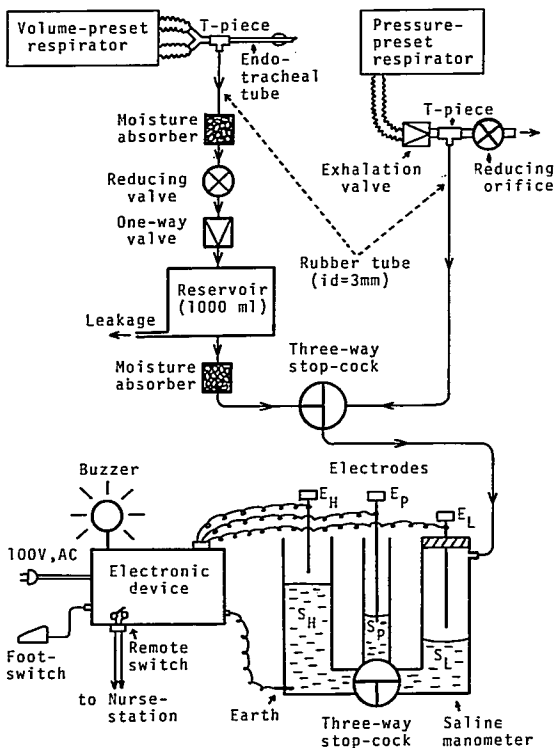


Fig. 2. Flow diagram of the components of the respirator alarm and their functional arrangement for use with volume-preset and pressure-present respirators.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The alarm unit is approximately 19 × 17 × 15 cm in size. It contains two systems of saline manometers with silver electrodes (fig. 2).

Volume-preset respirator alarm. The T-piece is inserted between the endotracheal tube and the Y-connector of the volume-preset respirator and the intratracheal pressure is led to a reservoir box, sized to accommodate approximately 1,000 ml, through a reducing valve and a unidirectional valve (fig. 2). The pressure in the reservoir is transmitted to a U-tube containing saline solution which has two adjustable silver electrodes above the

level of the solution. The reservoir has a small leak, and the reservoir pressure is reduced by this leak. When intratracheal pressure is reduced by leakage of the cuff of the endotracheal tube or disconnection of the respirator from the patient's airway, the reservoir pressure decreases, the saline solution rises to the low-pressure electrode, and the buzzer is activated. When the intratracheal pressure is elevated by an increase in airway resistance or a reduction of pulmonary compliance, the reservoir pressure continues to be elevated, the saline solution reaches the high-pressure electrode, and a different buzzer rings.

The higher-pitched alarm rings through the speaker.

To set the pressure-preset respirator alarm: 1) The selector knob is turned to "p" position, which simultaneously positions switches S_1 , S_2 , S_3 , and S_4 in "p" positions. 2) The level of E_p is adjusted to touch S_p with each expiration. 3) The power switch is turned on.

When the volume of gas expired by the patient is reduced, E_p does not make contact with S_p . Transistor Tr_2 and relay Ry_2 are not energized, and all r_2 switches remained open. Ten seconds later transistor Tr_1 and relay Ry_1 are energized by the delay-p circuit and all

r_1 switches close. The higher-pitched alarm rings through the speaker.

Electric power source alarm. When the electric power source is disconnected, relay Ry_3 does not energize and switch r_3 closes. The middle-pitched alarm rings through the speaker.

REFERENCES

1. Lamont II, Fairley HB: A pressure-sensitive ventilator alarm. *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 26:359, 1965
2. Wilger RN, Myers RA, Duffy JP, et al: Warning system for piston-type respirator. *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 27:509, 1966

Pneumotachometry—A Means to Prevent Malfunction Caused by Mucous Deposition

MEYER SAKLAD, M.D., AND ROBERT WEYERHAEUSER

Pneumotachometry, the measurement of air flow into and out of the lungs, is being increasingly employed to monitor ventilation during acute illness. The pneumotachometer is placed in the air stream close to the patient's mouth. On the patient end it may be attached to a mask or an endotracheal or tracheostomy tube. On the other end a pneumotachometer may be open to the atmosphere or it may be attached to an anesthesia apparatus or a ventilator.

The two most commonly used devices for this purpose are the Fleisch and the Silverman pneumotachometers, which function by creating a very slight resistance to air flow. The pressure differential across this resistance is proportional to, and in phase with, the speed of air movement. Through electronic means, change in pressure is converted to an electrical signal which may be displayed on an oscilloscope. Such a tracing is informative of respiratory flow patterns. This flow signal, coupled with airway and/or intraesophageal pres-

sure, can be manipulated by an analog or digital computer to measure continuously many ventilatory values such as minute volume, compliance, and work of breathing. The information thus obtained is valuable for both diagnosis and treatment. Such data may also be used to evaluate and guide ventilator performance and adjustment.

In the Silverman pneumotachometer the resistance is produced by a very fine wire mesh screen, and in the Fleisch device, by a series of parallel tubes. In clinical use, the screen and the parallel tubes accumulate both water condensation and mucus or exudate coughed up by the patient. Deposits of such material on the screen or within the parallel tubes result in an immediate but unknown change in the metering characteristics of the apparatus. The pneumotachometer becomes nonfunctional. The effect of water condensation is overcome by electrical heating, but the heating device does not prevent the alterations in the efficiency of the instrument by deposition of exudate. Pneumotachometry is sufficiently im-

Received from the Division of Anesthesia Research, Rhode Island Hospital, Eddy Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02902.