

PRESS RELEASE

19th February, 2012

Artificial Lung Machine used for the first time at Tapion Hospital

On the night of Friday 17th February, 2012 first world medicine was achieved at Tapion Hospital, Saint Lucia.

On 14th February, a 20 year old male from Micoud, was transferred from St. Jude's Hospital, after sustaining severe chest trauma due to motor vehicular accident.

After initial assessment and CT scan of the head and chest, severe chest trauma with bilateral pneumothorax (air between chest and the lung), massive progressive surgical emphysema (air under the skin) and severe lung damage were diagnosed.

Despite treatment to remove the air, the severely damaged lungs could not function properly. He developed severe acute respiratory distress syndrome, which required mechanical ventilation and care in the High Dependency Unit at Tapion Hospital.

The patient's condition remained critical. After consultations with specialists in Saint Lucia, Barbados and Martinique, the doctors and family agreed to airlift the patient to the University Hospital in Martinique for complex ICU care.

Several attempts over several hours were made by the Martinique Air Ambulance crew to transfer the patient, but the deterioration of the fragile lung function and high risk of dying during transportation necessitated another approach.

There was an absolute need for an artificial lung machine - **ECMO** (Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) for the patient to survive. This is a lifesaving surgical procedure of last resort, enabling a machine to do the function of the failed lung.

A second team of cardio-thoracic surgeon and perfusionist with ECMO machine arrived at 9 30pm on Friday night at the Tapion Hospital, to perform the surgery on site. The ECMO procedure was performed successfully with the support of the Tapion team, and patient transferred to Martinique.

This procedure was the first in the OECS. It is only performed in developed countries with tertiary health care systems able to facilitate cardiac surgery, heart transplants, severe cardiogenic shock, cardiac arrest or respiratory failure.

Tapion Hospital was pleased to be part of this first world intervention, as it continues to build capacity in state of the art health care in Saint Lucia.

The Tapion Hospital wishes to thank the French Government and the Doctors of the La Meynard Hospital as well as the Government of St. Lucia through the French Embassy here in St. Lucia and the St. Lucian Consul in Martinique.



ECMO Machine



Team of Doctors and Nurses



Doctors at Work