SEVERE PULMONARY EMBOLISM ASSOCIATED WITH AIR TRAVEL

ABSTRACT

Background Air travel is believed to be a risk factor for pulmonary embolism, but the relation between pulmonary embolism and distance flown has not been documented. The aim of this study was to investigate whether the duration of air travel is related to the risk of pulmonary embolism.

Methods

Results

Conclusions

AIR travel is considered a risk factor for pulmonary embolism and has been termed "economy-class syndrome."[1,2] Immobility, aggravated by the limited space in economy class, is assumed to be responsible for this risk. Whereas the number of air passengers continues to increase, the relation between pulmonary embolism and the distance traveled by air has not yet been sufficiently investigated.[3,4] Roughly 100 cases of pulmonary embolism occurring after air travel have been reported during the past three decades.[1,2,5-23] Most of these reports were based on small numbers of patients, included cases of both deep venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism, or included poorly documented cases. We therefore undertook a more comprehensive evaluation of this association.

To test the hypothesis that a greater duration of air travel is a risk factor for pulmonary embolism, we