

International panel updates definition of acute respiratory distress syndrome

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Gordon D. Rubenfeld, M.D., of the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Center, Toronto, Canada, and colleagues with the ARDS (acute respiratory distress syndrome) Definition Task Force, developed a new definition of ARDS (the Berlin Definition) that focused on feasibility, reliability, validity and objective evaluation of its performance.

ARDS is a life-threatening [lung condition](#) that prevents enough oxygen from getting to the lungs and into the blood. Among the changes the panel proposed was a draft definition with 3 mutually exclusive categories of mild, moderate, and severe ARDS based on degree of hypoxemia (insufficient [oxygenation](#) of the blood) and four ancillary variables for severe ARDS. Using the Berlin Definition, stages of mild, moderate, and severe ARDS were associated with increased mortality (27 percent; 32 percent; and 45 percent, respectively), and increased median duration of [mechanical ventilation](#) in survivors.

The authors write that compared with the previous definition for ARDS, the final Berlin Definition had better predictive validity for mortality. "This updated and revised Berlin Definition for ARDS addresses a number of the limitations of the [previous] definition. The approach of combining consensus discussions with empirical evaluation may serve as a model to create more accurate, evidence-based, critical illness syndrome definitions, and to better inform clinical care, research, and health services planning."

More information: *JAMA*, [doi:10.1001/JAMA.2012.5669](https://doi.org/10.1001/JAMA.2012.5669)

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