Dear Editor

Re: ‘Hazards of tube thoracostomy in patients on a ventilator’
Kasra Shaikhrezai and Vipin Zamvar
Journal of Cardiothoracic Surgery
Case report

Thank you for your invitation to review the above case report. Shaikhrezai and Zamvar report their management strategy for a serious complication of intercostal tube thoracostomy in a patient ventilated for respiratory failure secondary to COPD. Lung laceration following tube thoracostomy is seen with alarming frequency especially in the presence of bullous lung disease and pleural adhesions. It is of note that that the CT scan depicted in this report demonstrates pleural adhesions and a loculated pneumothorax with severely emphysematous underlying lung parenchyma. A chest radiograph before the insertion of the first chest tube is not depicted here. If this had suggested a loculated or anterior pneumothorax, a CT scan prior to insertion of the first chest tube may have demonstrated pleural adhesions and altered management. The authors are however correct to point out that high pressure mechanical ventilation can also be regarded as a compounding factor in this case and their suggestion to reduce PEEP or briefly disconnect from the ventilator to isolate the lung at the time of tube thoracostomy is very reasonable.

In summary, this is a well written account of a serious yet preventable complication of a commonly performed bedside procedure. The authors make sensible, practical recommendations on how to reduce the risk of this complication in terms of surgical technique as well as training and credentialing of the healthcare providers. I therefore support and recommend publication of this case report in The Journal of Cardiothoracic Surgery.

I consent to my review being disclosed to the authors and to its publication in the journal.

Best wishes

Behzad Soleimani, MD, MRCP(UK), FRCS(C-Th)

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests