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Najate Achamrah, Marta Delsoglio, Elisabeth de Waele, Mette M. Berger,  
Claude Pichard

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1 **Indirect calorimetry: the 6 main issues**

2

3 Najate Achamrah<sup>1,2</sup>, Marta Delsoglio<sup>3</sup>, Elisabeth De Waele<sup>4</sup>, Mette M. Berger<sup>5</sup>, Claude  
4 Pichard<sup>3</sup>

5

6 1 Nutrition Department, Rouen University Hospital Center, Rouen, France

7 2 Normandie Univ, URN, INSERM UMR 1073, Nutrition, Inflammation et dysfonction de l'axe  
8 Intestin-Cerveau, IRIB, Rouen, France

9 3 Clinical Nutrition, Geneva University Hospital, Geneva, Switzerland

10 4 Nutrition Department, Universitair Ziekenhuis Brussel, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

11 4 Intensive Care Department, Universitair Ziekenhuis Brussel, Vrije Universiteit Brussels,  
12 Belgium

13 5 Service of adult Intensive Care and Burn, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne,  
14 Switzerland

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20 **Corresponding author**

21 Najate Achamrah, Department of Clinical Nutrition, Rouen University Hospital, 1 Rue de  
22 Germont, 76000 Rouen, France. E-mail address: najate.achamrah@chu-rouen.fr

23

24 **Abstract**

25 **Background and aims:** Optimal nutritional therapy, including the individually adapted  
26 provision of energy, is associated with better clinical outcomes. Indirect calorimetry is the  
27 best tool to measure and monitor energy expenditure and hence optimize the energy  
28 prescription. Similarly to other medical techniques, indications and contra-indications must  
29 be acknowledged to optimise the use of indirect calorimetry in clinical routine.

30 Measurements should be repeated to enable adaptation to the clinical evolution, as energy  
31 expenditure may change substantially. This review aims at providing clinicians with the  
32 knowledge to routinely use indirect calorimetry and interpret the results.

33 **Method:** We performed a bibliographic research of publications referenced in PubMed using  
34 the following terms: “indirect calorimetry”, “energy expenditure”, “resting energy  
35 expenditure”, “VCO<sub>2</sub>”, “VO<sub>2</sub>”, “nutritional therapy”. We included mainly studies published in  
36 the last ten years, related to indirect calorimetry principles, innovations, patient’s benefits,  
37 clinical use in practice and medico-economic aspects.

38 **Results:** We have gathered the knowledge required for routine use of indirect calorimetry in  
39 clinical practice and interpretation of the results. A few clinical cases illustrate the decision-  
40 making process around its application for prescription, and individual optimisation of  
41 nutritional therapy. We also describe the latest technical innovations and the results of  
42 tailoring nutrition therapy according to the measured energy expenditure in medico-  
43 economic benefits.

44 **Conclusion:** The routine use of indirect calorimetry should be encouraged as a strategy to  
45 optimize nutrition care.

46

47

48 **Key words:** Indirect calorimetry, energy expenditure, optimal nutritional therapy, medico-  
49 economics

50

51 **Introduction**

52 Optimal nutritional therapy requires an individually adapted provision of energy as close as  
53 possible to patient's real energy expenditure (EE). Indirect calorimetry (IC) is the clinical  
54 standard for measuring EE and monitoring the variations over time of healthy or diseased  
55 individuals. EE measurements allow to optimize the energy prescription in line with the  
56 concept of personalized medicine and goal-oriented therapy, including the adjustment of  
57 energy prescription to the dynamic metabolic changes related to the course of the disease  
58 or treatments. Both under- and over-nutrition have been shown to negatively influence the  
59 clinical outcomes (1, 2). In critical illness, an energy deficit around -6000 kcal has been  
60 identified as the cut-off for increased risks of nosocomial infections, prolonged mechanical  
61 ventilation and length of stay, as well as lower probability of hospital discharge (3).  
62 Therefore, repeated EE measurement has been proposed as Point of Care Testing allowing  
63 to identify adequacy, inadequacy or failure of an ongoing nutritional support (4). Until now  
64 IC is rarely used in clinical settings because the devices are unavailable, manpower  
65 demanding and expensive. A feasibility trial revealed that more than half of critically ill adult  
66 patients may benefit a metabolic evaluation to guide nutritional therapy (5) and the benefit  
67 in pediatric ICU's is even higher (6). The new generation of indirect calorimeters is  
68 characterized by a short duration to obtain a stable measurement, high level of precision  
69 and ergonomics, at affordable costs. These technical developments allow a broader use of IC  
70 for in- and out-patients. Therefore, the routine use of IC should be encouraged as a strategy  
71 to optimize nutrition care.

72 This review aims at sharing with clinicians the knowledge required for routine use of IC in  
73 their practice and interpretation of the results. A few clinical cases illustrate the optimal use  
74 of calorimetry as well as its limits, and the decision-making process to use the results for the  
75 prescription of optimal nutrition support. We also describe the latest innovations and  
76 related benefits, including medico-economics, of tailoring nutritional support according to  
77 EE measurement.

78

79 **Methods**

80 We performed a bibliographic research of publications referenced in PubMed database,  
81 using the following terms: "indirect calorimetry", "energy expenditure", "resting energy  
82 expenditure", "VCO<sub>2</sub>", "VO<sub>2</sub>", "nutritional therapy". We included mainly studies published in

83 the last ten years, related to indirect calorimetry principle, innovations, patient-centred  
84 benefits, clinical use in practice and medico-economic aspects. Based on authors' clinical  
85 experience, we provide few clinical cases.

86

### 87 **1. Principle of indirect calorimetry**

88 Many methods have been developed to assess EE in humans. (7). Briefly, four techniques are  
89 available. The doubly-labelled water is the method of choice for measuring total energy  
90 expenditure (TEE) over a period of time (8), but its routine application in clinical settings is  
91 limited by the need to use of stable isotopes and mass spectrometer to analyse the samples  
92 requiring days to obtain the results. Direct calorimetry and calorimetry room are technically  
93 very demanding and costly, and their use is limited to research centers. The Fick method  
94 allows to calculate the oxygen extraction across the pulmonary system and to extrapolate  
95 the EE. It requires the insertion of a catheter in the pulmonary artery and its invasiveness  
96 and relative imprecision limits its use (9).

97 Because of its non-invasiveness, repeatability and affordability, IC is the favourite tool to  
98 measure EE in patients with various pathologies, either during spontaneous breathing or  
99 mechanical ventilation. Indirect calorimeters measure oxygen consumption ( $VO_2$ ), carbon  
100 dioxide production ( $VCO_2$ ), air flow and derive EE by the Weir's equation:  $EE(kcal/day) = 1.44$   
101  $\times [3.94 \times VO_2(mL/min) + 1.11 \times VCO_2(mL/min) + \text{urinary nitrogen}(g/day) \times 2,17]$  (**Figure 1**).  
102 Nitrogen balance, that requires a precise quantification of both nitrogen intake and losses,  
103 needs time, technical and human resources. The principle that nitrogen is neither utilized  
104 nor produced during respiration has enabled the use of formulae deviate minimally from the  
105 Weir's equation, neglecting nitrogen (10). J.B. Weir also proposed to derive accurate EE of  
106 measurements from the fractional depletion of  $O_2$  concentration alone, not requiring  
107 measurement of  $CO_2$  emission. This equation is interesting in studies compromised by faulty  
108  $CO_2$  measurements (i.e. gas that interferes with  $CO_2$  sensing). Recently, Karl Kaiyala  
109 reported full derivation of the Weir's equation and a validation in an experimental setup  
110 (11).

111

112 The characteristics of the  $O_2$  and  $CO_2$  analysers is critical and has recently gained much in  
113 terms of accuracy and linearity (7). Nevertheless, the upper limit for the measurement of  $O_2$

114 concentration remains around 70%, because above this value of air enrichment a growing  
115 inaccuracy is observed due to the impact of small reading error on the overall calculation of  
116 EE. The ratio of  $VCO_2$  to  $VO_2$  ( $VCO_2/VO_2$ ), called the respiratory quotient (RQ), reflects the  
117 rate of substrate oxidation in metabolically stable subjects (12). RQ is also a quality indicator  
118 of the measurement adequacy (physiological between 0.67 and 1.2).

119  
120 Total energy expenditure (TEE) is the sum of basal energy expenditure (BEE), diet-induced  
121 thermogenesis (DIT) and activity induced energy expenditure (activity EE) (13) (**Figure 2**). DIT  
122 is defined as the production of heat related to substrate oxidation during energy uptake. DIT  
123 varies according to the quantity and type of oxidized substrate (i.e. proteins, carbohydrates,  
124 and fat). Activity EE is the most variable component of TEE and depends on the type,  
125 intensity and frequency of physical activity. BEE measurements require specific conditions  
126 (i.e. free of physical and psychological stress, a thermally neutral environment, fasting state  
127 for more than 10 h prior to the measurement), rarely met in the clinical environment.  
128 Therefore, BEE is mostly aimed at research purpose. In clinical routine, IC is used to assess  
129 REE that reflects vital activities (cardiac, respiratory, secretory, cellular, basal muscle tone).  
130 REE contributes from 50% up to 75% of TEE (**Figure 2**), while activity EE has a very limited  
131 impact as only active exercise influences EE and nutritional adjustment is not indicated (14).

132

## 133 **2. Current innovations in indirect calorimetry**

134 Currently available indirect calorimeters are costly and technically complex, requiring a  
135 warm-up time and calibration before each EE measurement (up to 30 min), extensive  
136 disinfection after use and a computer to export and analyse the results. Lack of precision of  
137 these devices has also been reported compared to the Deltatrac Metabolic Monitor® (Datex,  
138 Finland) (15). This 35-year-old device is often considered to be the reference device,  
139 although its production was discontinued in the early 90s (16). This calorimeter uses an  
140 external mixing chamber which generates stable measurements because the expiratory gas  
141 is physically “averaged” before being analyzed. Nevertheless, the need for a large volume  
142 mixing chamber ( $\approx$  5 liters) complicated the development of small devices, and the need for  
143 stabilization of gas concentrations in the mixing chamber limits the validity of short duration  
144 measurements (e.g. <10 min).

145 Recent indirect calorimeters use the “breath-by-breath” technology: O<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub>  
146 concentrations are measured continuously by gas analyzers synchronized with expiratory  
147 flow measurements, by the in-line flow meter, to allow gas exchange calculations with every  
148 breath. Although this method permits rapid measurements and conception of small devices,  
149 it is prone to errors due to the response time of the gas analyzers and software (17).

150 An international group of investigators with a strong interest in metabolic issues, the  
151 International Multicentric Study Group for Indirect Calorimetry (ICALIC), has recently  
152 developed and validated an IC device that meets clinical needs (Bottom-up strategy) (Table  
153 1). This study has been supported by both the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and  
154 Metabolism (ESPEN), and the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine (ESICM). The  
155 newly developed calorimeter (Q-NRG<sup>®</sup> calorimeter, Cosmed, Italy) has been tested in vitro  
156 (18) and evaluated in a multicentric study (17) (**Figure 3**). The Q-NRG<sup>®</sup> is equipped with a  
157 newly developed dynamic micro-mixing chamber (2 ml) which reduces time stabilization of  
158 gas concentrations and hence the VO<sub>2</sub>, and VCO<sub>2</sub> variability. The Q-NRG device samples just  
159 a fraction of the expired subject's breath. The sampling flow rate of the device is constant  
160 (around 200mL/min, as other calorimeter devices), but the quantity of the gas brought into  
161 the Mixing Chamber is proportional to the ventilation of the subject; a patented algorithm  
162 developed by the manufacturer, allows the system to sample a quantity of gas that is just a  
163 fraction of the expired gas (around 0,015% of minute ventilation). The algorithm takes into  
164 account the different levels of ventilation which can be achieved by different subjects at  
165 rest, tailoring the sampling flow rate according to the minute ventilation. The ability to  
166 obtain data in a short time and with a fast refresh is then reached by minimizing all the  
167 pneumatic paths from the micro mixing chamber and the gas analyzers. To put in simple  
168 words, the system is "miniaturized" (in a proportion of around 1:100) related to a standard  
169 one. Possible variations in terms of water vapor are prevented by equilibrating humidity of  
170 the sampled gas by means of a Nafion dryer placed in series with gas analyzers.

171 The device has been validated *in-vitro* and *in vivo* against the gold standard technology for  
172 gas composition measurements, mass spectrometer (MAX300-LG, Extrel, Pittsburgh, USA)  
173 (19, 20). The REE measurements are obtained in 5 to 7 minutes, on average, without prior  
174 calibrations and without disinfection (single-use connectors). The Q-NRG<sup>®</sup> is a portable

175 device which can be used at the patient's bedside, in spontaneous breathing (canopy or  
176 facial mask) or mechanical ventilation (connection to the ventilator).

177

### 178 **3. Any place for predictive equations?**

179 Many predictive equations have been developed to provide estimated REE using  
180 anthropometric data (height, weight, fat mass, fat-free mass...) and clinical conditions  
181 (mechanical ventilation, disease severity scores such as SOFA, APACHE, SAPS etc...). The  
182 accuracy of these equations is very low when applied to patients with different  
183 characteristics than those for whom they have been initially developed. Several studies have  
184 assessed the validity of these equations in overweight and obese subjects compared with IC,  
185 showing a wide variation in their results (21-23). Likewise, predictive equations are not  
186 suitable to estimate REE in patients with anorexia nervosa with body mass index  $<16 \text{ kg/m}^2$   
187 (24). In ICU patients, numerous systematic reviews have demonstrated the poor reliability of  
188 predictive equations (25). In addition, the body weight (BW) is rarely available and difficult  
189 to accurately assess in the ICU as it is generally modified by fluid resuscitation. No equation  
190 is sufficiently accurate to be considered clinically acceptable compared to IC, regardless of  
191 the BW used for calculations (anamnestic BW, measured BW, adjusted BW, and ideal BW for  
192 body mass index at  $22.5 \text{ kg/m}^2$  and at  $25 \text{ kg/m}^2$ ) (**Figure 4**) (26). In mechanically ventilated  
193 patients  $\text{VCO}_2$  measured by the ventilator has been proposed to approximate EE (27).  
194 However, Oshima et al. reported that EE from  $\text{CO}_2$  ( $\text{EEVCO}_2$ ) was not sufficiently accurate to  
195 consider it as an alternative to measured EE, since the variability of RQ is likely to influence  
196 the accuracy of the results (28). Despite limitations, and if IC is not available, ESPEN  
197 guidelines (29) recommend the use of  $\text{VCO}_2$  obtained from the ventilators of mechanically  
198 ventilated patients, as previously described (27). In the absence of  $\text{VCO}_2$  measurement, the  
199 use of simple weight-based equation ( $20\text{-}25 \text{ kcal/kg/day}$ ) should be preferred.

200

### 201 **4. Evidence supporting patient-centred benefits of using IC**

202 There is a lack of recognition of the impact on clinical outcome of feeding patients according  
203 to their real EE. Optimal nutrition, i.e. avoiding under- and over-feeding, has been associated  
204 with better clinical outcomes in ICU patients (1, 2). There is a relative risk of overfeeding  
205 during the early phase of critical illness (0 to 5 days post ICU admission) when 50 to 75% of



206 energy is covered by glucose endogenous production through the mobilization of muscle  
207 proteins, glycogen, and lipid stores during illness. We still have no clinical available measure  
208 of the amount of glucose produced during illness over time. Throughout this early phase,  
209 endogenous energy production covers nearly two thirds of the energy needs and careful  
210 interpretation of REE measured by IC is necessary for the adequate prescription of energy in  
211 order to avoid overfeeding (30) (**Figure 5**). The optimal energy provision to the ICU patients  
212 remains an ongoing debate (31). Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) reported positive  
213 outcome in patients receiving calories closer to the measured REE. The TICACOS study  
214 showed trend toward lower mortality in the patients who received higher calorie guided by  
215 IC performed day-to-day (cumulative energy balance of 2008 +/- 2177 kcal vs -3550 +/- 4591  
216 kcal) (hospital mortality of 32.3 versus 47.7%, respectively, P=0.058) (32). Heidegger et al.  
217 found a significant reduction in nosocomial infection in patients receiving supplemental  
218 parenteral nutrition (SPN) to cover with calorie target (cumulative energy balance of 124 +/-  
219 1589 kcal vs -2317 +/- 2657 kcal) (hazard ratio 0.65, 95% CI 0.43–0.97; P=0.0338) (33). REE  
220 was measured only once to tailor the nutrition support for 5 days. Ideally, the REE should be  
221 measured every day or at least if the clinical condition changes. Furthermore, how much of  
222 the measured EE should be administered daily is not known yet and probably depends on  
223 the phase of disease. The EAT-ICU study reached on day 1 the 100% calorie target according  
224 to measured EE and did not find any significant advantage compared to standard therapy  
225 regarding physical quality of life at 6 months nor improvement of any studied outcomes  
226 (25kcal/kg/day) (34). However, to our knowledge, few RCTs documenting the effect of  
227 different energy level provision and using IC to determine the goal, controlled the amount of  
228 proteins delivered between groups. The main method currently available to determine  
229 protein needs is to measure nitrogen balance, which requires a precise quantification of  
230 both nitrogen intake and losses. Ideally, total urinary nitrogen should be measured and not  
231 estimated from the urinary urea content that is highly variable in clinical conditions  
232 associated with renal failure and water retention, e.g. in critically ill patients or those with  
233 cardiac failure (35). Few clinical studies have measured nitrogen balance because of the  
234 resources needed. Further RCTs evaluating the effect of different calorie provision using IC,  
235 as well as different protein amount between groups, are required.

236

237 Monitoring REE is also a useful strategy for weight -losing or gaining- patients by achieving a  
238 negative or positive energy balance, respectively. Combining IC with the measurement of  
239 body weight and composition may be useful to further optimize the nutrition prescription by  
240 observing the effect of energy intake on these parameters, and also for the interpretation of  
241 feeding energy requirement over time. Fat-free mass (FFM), including muscles, organs,  
242 bone, total water, is the primary determinant of REE (36) due to its mass, while its O<sub>2</sub>  
243 consumption per gram of tissue is small. FFM will impact the REE depending on factors such  
244 as its quantity, assessed by body composition measurements, and metabolic activity, which  
245 could be influenced by race, gender, physical activity, and diseases. Clinical conditions  
246 associated with muscle wasting, hypercatabolism and/or immobilization, lead to REE  
247 variations.

## 248 **5. Use of indirect calorimetry in clinical practice**

249 Measurements may be repeated at a frequency varying according to the dynamic of the  
250 clinical evolution. Similarly to other medical techniques, indications and contra-indications  
251 must be considered to properly use IC in clinical practice and are described below. In the  
252 future, COntinuous Metabolic MOnitoring (COMMO) could be possible, providing real-time  
253 values, as other monitor equipments in ICU do (37).

### 254 **5.1. Indications for indirect calorimetry**

255 IC allows the customization of energy prescription in spite of important REE variations, due  
256 e.g. to sepsis, paralysis, etc. Kreyman et al. previously suggested that IC could be used to  
257 monitor the development of sepsis syndrome and septic shock (38). More recently, in a  
258 retrospective cohort study, Zusman et al. showed reduced REE in ICU patients who died,  
259 probably resulting from multi-organ dysfunction in sepsis leading to metabolic shutdown (2).  
260 Inversely, Frankenfield et al. reported that the diagnosis is not a useful factor in predicting  
261 REE (39). This highlights the importance of IC-based REE measurements as metabolic needs  
262 may shift through the course of the disease.

263 REE is influenced by the natural course of disease (inflammation, immune system activation,  
264 etc.), physical immobilization which leads to muscle wasting reaching up to 300 - 600g of  
265 lean mass per day, and medical interventions (treatments, surgery, ventilation, etc.). IC  
266 should be repeated as the clinical condition varies to better define the changing energy

267 target. **Figure 6** illustrates the dynamic evolution of measured REE during refeeding of  
268 anorexia nervosa patients (40).

269 Day-to-day variations of REE may provide an insight about clinical improvement or  
270 deterioration of clinical condition. While REE is generally reduced during shock phases, REE  
271 frequently increases with inflammatory conditions, although in an unpredictable way.  
272 Hypermetabolism is the result of an elevated pro-inflammatory cytokine production, which  
273 is associated to increased production and release of counter-regulatory hormones, such as  
274 cortisol, glucagon, and catecholamines. The prognostic value of IC has been reported  
275 recently to reflect skeletal muscle mass and predict mortality in 126 patients with cirrhosis  
276 (41). However, the results are still controversial and should still not be applied in clinical  
277 practice. Likewise, Maxwell et al. reported that the nutritional support in patients with RQ <  
278 0.83 on day 3 is associated with a reduced protein utilization and optimizes the achievement  
279 of positive nitrogen balance by day 7, in 27 patients with severe traumatic brain injury (42).  
280 Wu et al. reported that in severe sepsis, the higher the REE in the first 5 days after  
281 admission, the higher the mortality (OR 1.018, 95% CI, 1.010–2.544,  $p = 0.031$ ) (43), whereas  
282 Kreymann et al. previously reported that the hypermetabolism might reflect the patient  
283 skeletal muscle mass reserve to respond to infection (38). Further studies are needed to  
284 better understand the metabolic evolution during sepsis and possible prognostic value of  
285 REE.

## 286 **5.2. Methodology: standard operating procedures (SOP)**

287 The IC standard operating procedures concretely depend on the device used. However, in  
288 accordance with the user manual, the following steps are generally required:

- 289 ○ a warm up time (5 to 30 min) before starting the measurement
- 290 ○ automatic or manual gas analyzers calibration using gases ( $N_2$ - $O_2$ - $CO_2$ ) of known  
291 concentration as reference
- 292 ○ an antibacterial filter placed between the IC and the canopy or the sampling line in  
293 the ventilator circuit
- 294 ○ disinfection of all disposables in contact with the patient (skin, secretions, exhaled  
295 air), unless they are for single use only. Particular attention and extensive  
296 disinfection procedures are required after measuring patients with serious infection  
297 (e.g. pseudomonas, tuberculosis, etc...).

298 **5.3. How to optimize REE measurement by indirect calorimetry?**

299 Conditions required to achieve reliable REE measurement and are summarized in **Table 2**.

300 The quality of any IC measurements is influenced by the stability of the metabolic  
301 conditions, detectable by the steady state period, at the time of the measurement. The  
302 steady-state period (STS) is defined as a period of low  $VO_2$  and  $VCO_2$  variations, usually  
303 <10%. STS achievement is required to validate REE measurements (44). Recent guidelines in  
304 healthy subjects and non-critically ill patients suggested that measurements of only 4  
305 minutes need to be averaged to determine the EE, once steady-state is achieved (12).

306 In order to ensure a stable and accurate result, IC must be conducted with strict adherence  
307 to resting conditions, not always possible in critical care. To attain these, the patient has to  
308 be informed and reassured about the safety of the measurement, either in fasted state or on  
309 continuous artificial nutrition, and be in a quiet environment without loud noises, music or  
310 any sources of distraction. Routine nursing care or activities involving other health care  
311 professionals, such as physical mobilization and painful or anxiety-provoking procedures,  
312 should be avoided. In ICU patients, change of sedation level, vasoactive agents' dose or  
313 mechanical ventilation parameters during IC lead to hardly interpretable results.

314 **5.4. How long should a measurement last?**

315 With most calorimeters, the achievement of reliable results requires a 15 to 30 minutes  
316 measurement. If a steady state is obtained after 15 minutes, there is no interest in  
317 prolonging the test.

318 **5.5. How to interpret the indirect calorimetry results?**

319 Raw variables generated by IC are:  $VO_2$ ,  $VCO_2$ , REE, coefficient of variation for  $VO_2$  and  $VCO_2$ .  
320 Normative values are summarized in **Table 3** and their interpretation is illustrated by 5  
321 clinical cases.

322 The possible causes of altered IC results are summarized in **Table 4**.

323 **5.6. How to tailor nutrition support according to IC results?**

324 The mean indirect calorimetry EE value reflects patient's REE at the time of measurement  
325 and it should be used to tailor the prescription of the nutritional therapy. However, if the  
326 measurement shows significant variability (> 10%), the result cannot be considered as

327 reliable and should not be used to determine the energy target. This variability may be due  
328 to gas leaks and / or changes in treatments and a new measurement under better conditions  
329 should be performed. In order to determine total patient's caloric needs, measured REE has  
330 to be extrapolated to TEE. Multiplication factors accounting for nutrition related  
331 thermogenesis and level of physical activity should be applied with clinical judgment, and is  
332 not required during continuous feeding in the ICU. Measurement during the acute phase  
333 (<72 hours) should be interpreted with caution. During this acute phase, the body produces  
334 and uses endogenous substrates resulting from proteolysis, lipolysis and gluconeogenesis.  
335 This is the reason why the current guidelines recommend the introduction of a progressive  
336 nutrition, aimed at the total coverage of the patient's needs (REE) only from the 4th day  
337 after admission to intensive care. A new IC measure is required in order to adjust the energy  
338 target when the clinical situation changes significantly (30).

### 339 **5.7. Examples of clinical cases**

340 Clinical condition deeply influences REE measurements. We report below 5 clinical cases to  
341 discuss the interpretation of IC results, as well as a few frequent and relevant question.  
342

### 343 **6. Medico-economic aspects**

344 To date and to our knowledge, there is no full economic analyses of IC. This medico-  
345 economic analysis should include the costs related to the measurement of EE by IC and the  
346 potential benefits to tailor nutrition support according to the measured EE. Its use is limited  
347 by the current high cost of the devices, manpower, calibration gas, and technical  
348 maintenance. However, the newly developed device minimizes these limitations, allowing  
349 clinicians to perform fast and accurate measurements.

350 Promoting a large use of IC to measure EE of in- and out patients should optimize nutrition  
351 care, clinical outcomes and costs. This hypothesis is based on two recurrent observations : -  
352 malnutrition increases morbidity, length of stay and costs in a large spectrum of diseases  
353 and treatments (45), and avoiding over- and underfeeding, in ICU patients attenuates the  
354 catabolic response to the injury, improves gastrointestinal function, and improves clinical  
355 outcomes reflected by a decrease in complication rates, duration of mechanical ventilation  
356 and length of stay, likely leading to cost savings. Therefore, tailoring the prescription of

357 feeding according to a target defined by IC is still debated for ICU patients. Recently, Berger  
358 et al. reported that feeding patients to meet an individualized measured energy target using  
359 SPN in case of failure of exclusive enteral nutrition from day 4 was associated with improved  
360 immunity, less systemic inflammation and a trend of less muscle mass loss (46). Pradelli et  
361 al. also reported that optimisation of energy provision using SPN is a cost-saving strategy in  
362 critically ill adults for whom EN is insufficient to meet energy requirements (47). Further  
363 studies are needed to better understand the medico-economic impact of targeting IC  
364 measured needs in ICU patients.

365

### 366 **Strengths and limitations**

367 In this review, the principle of indirect calorimetry was deliberately not developed as the aim  
368 was to provide an educational tool for the routine use of indirect calorimetry and the  
369 interpretation of the results. In this regard, the five clinical cases represent the main  
370 strength of this review, based on clinicians' experiences.

371

### 372 **Conclusion**

373 Indirect calorimetry is the gold standard to measure energy expenditure to optimize the  
374 energy prescription in line with the concept of personalized and goal oriented medicine: the  
375 latter requires an adjustment of the energy prescription to the dynamic metabolic changes  
376 related to the course of the disease or treatments. Using indirect calorimetry goes along  
377 with a feeding protocol, and with the monitoring of the achievement of the prescribed goals.  
378 The routine use of IC should be encouraged as a strategy to optimize nutrition care.  
379 Education for use of IC must be disseminated worldwide.

380

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383

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391

#### 392 **Conflicts of interest**

393 All the coauthors have contributed to the development and validation of the new indirect  
394 calorimeter (Q-NRG) in collaboration with the manufacturer, but independently in terms of  
395 financial support (see above). All coauthors have a major motivation to promote calorimetry  
396 for clinical and research activities as they consider IC has a corner stone for optimal  
397 nutrition, but they do not have commercial interest or receive personal benefits for this  
398 action.

399

#### 400 **Statement of authorship**

401 Najate Achamrah and Claude Pichard have outlined this manuscript. Marta Delsoglio,  
402 Elisabeth De Waele, and Mette M. Berger adapted the pedagogic content and critically  
403 reviewed the manuscript.

404

405 **References**

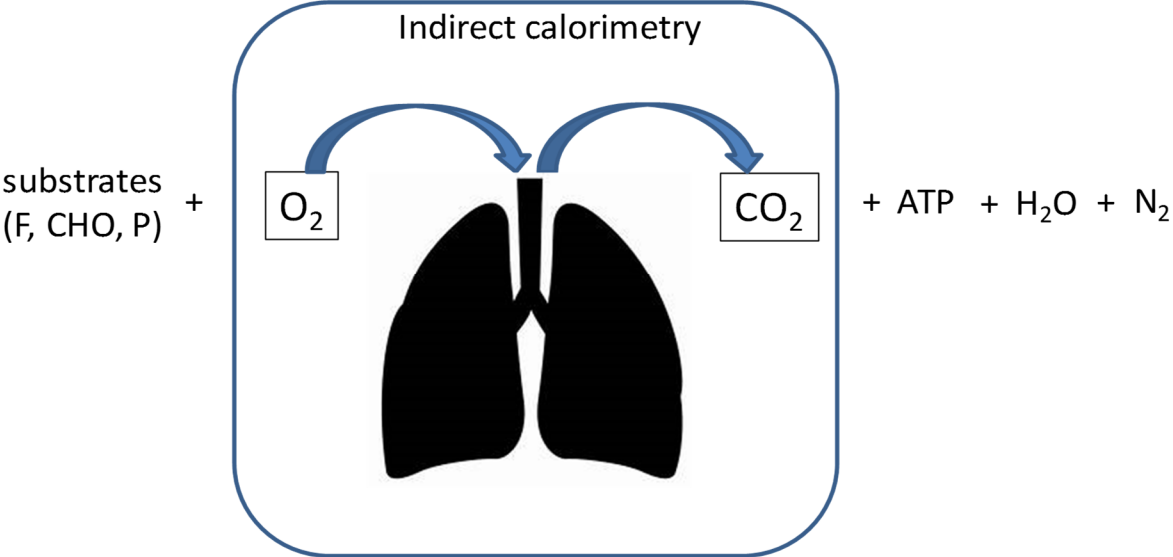
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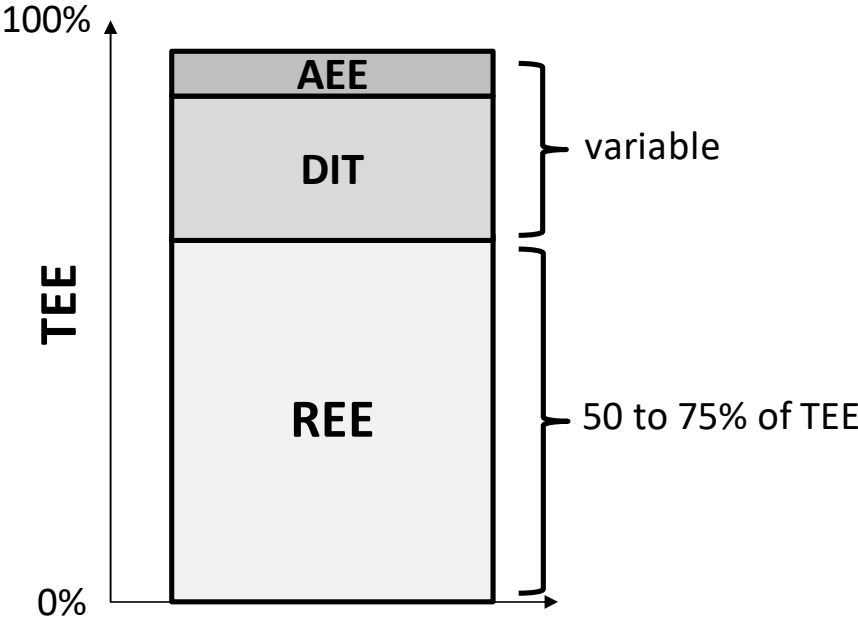
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**Figure 1: Principle of indirect calorimetry.** Schematically the oxidation of substrates (fat, carbohydrates and proteins) results in the production of energy (ATP), water and nitrogen. Indirect calorimetry measures the differences of concentrations of O<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> between the inspired and expired gases, and the flow of gas. Energy expenditure is then calculated using the Weir equation. F: fat; CHO: carbohydrates; P: proteins; N<sub>2</sub>: Nitrogen; H<sub>2</sub>O: water; ATP: adenosine triphosphate.



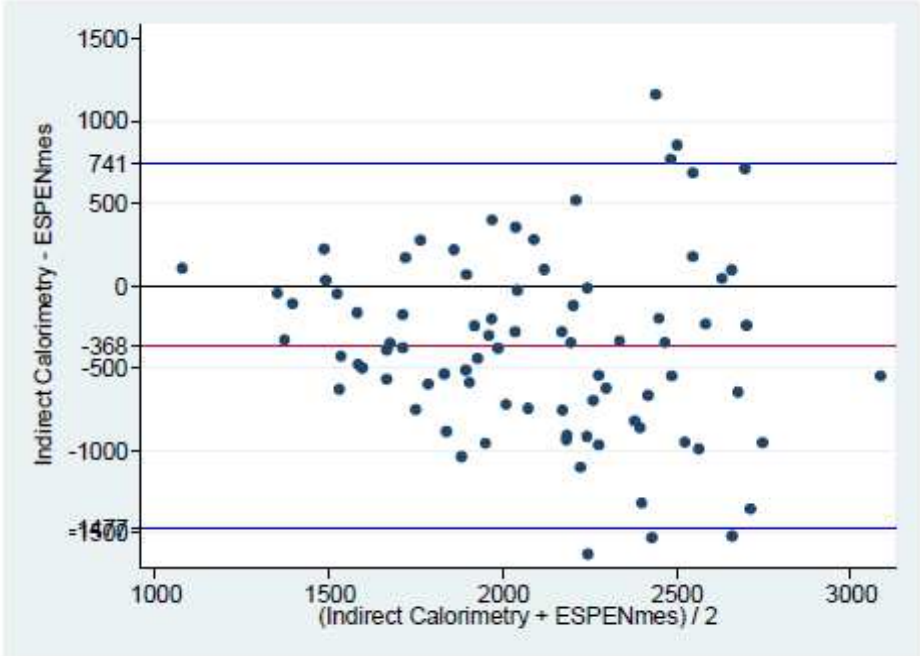
**Figure 2: Components of total energy expenditure.** Total energy expenditure is the sum of basal energy expenditure, diet-induced thermogenesis and activity induced energy expenditure. REE represents 50% to up to 75% of TEE. DIT varies according to the quantity and type of oxidized substrate. The contribution of AEE is limited when patient is bed rested. AEE: activity induced energy expenditure; DIT: diet-induced thermogenesis; REE: resting energy expenditure; TEE: total energy expenditure.



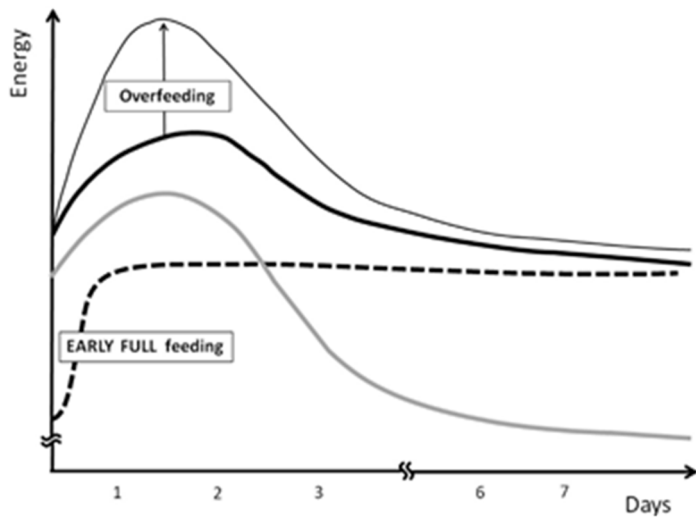
**Figure 3: Q-NRG® calorimeter (Cosmed, Italy).** The Q-NRG® calorimeter has new characteristics: high level of accuracy and reproducibility for clinical and research use, no warm-up time delay, flexible site for sampling, fast sampling rate, micro-mixing chamber , compatibility with most ventilators, working with a FiO2 up to 70%, reduced in weight and size instrument, less sensitive to transport, easy disinfection, affordability.



**Figure 4: Bland & Altman plots comparing energy expenditure measured by indirect calorimetry and calculated according to 20 kcal/kg ESPEN first week predictive equation** (adapted with permission from Graf et al. Clinical Nutrition, 2017 [26]). The ESPEN equation shows large variability (>700 kcal/d) when compared with indirect calorimetry, and therefore cannot replace IC measurements. ESPENmes= YYY

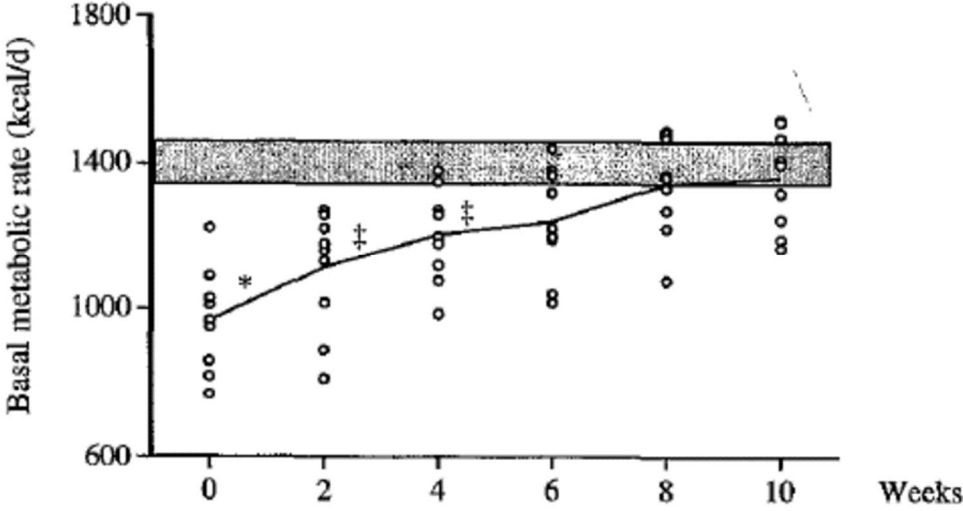


**Figure 5: Relative overfeeding during the early phase of critical illness** (reproduced with permission from Oshima et al. Clinical Nutrition, 2017 [17]). During the early phase of critical illness, endogenous energy production covers up to 2/3 of the energy needs and careful interpretation of REE measured by IC is necessary for the adequate prescription of energy to avoid overfeeding. Solid bold line: total energy expenditure; grey bold line: adapted endogenous energy production; dotted bold line: early energy administration; thin line: combined endogenous and exogenous energy administration.



**Figure 6: Repeated REE measurement in 9 anorexia nervosa patients during refeeding for a time period of 10 weeks.** REE progressively increases during refeeding.

Average (solid line) of all values for week 0, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. Values of the filled horizontal area are the mean  $\pm$  SEM of age-, sex- and height-matched controls. \*  $p < 0.0001$ , †  $p < 0.001$ , ‡  $p < 0.05$ , anorexia nervosa patients versus controls (unpaired t test). Reproduced with permission from [40].





**Table 1: Ideal characteristics of a new indirect calorimeter in clinical settings**

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High accuracy (error < 3%)

Rapid measurements (< 15')

Ease of use (hardware and software)

Easy disinfection and maintenance

Reduced size, portable and battery power

Affordable (acquisition and maintenance)

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**Table 2: Considerations for reliable REE measurement with indirect calorimetry**

	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Reliability limiting factors</b>
<b>Patient</b>	Resting	Agitation, involuntary muscle movements
	Body temperature	Changes >0°C <1 hr before and/or during IC
	Ventilation	Changes in ventilatory parameters (FiO <sub>2</sub> , PEEP, Peak ventilatory pressure) <1 hr before and/or during IC
	Air leaks	Loss of O <sub>2</sub> and/or CO <sub>2</sub>
	FiO <sub>2</sub> ≤ 70%	Technical limit of IC (cf § 1)
	PEEP ≤ 10cmH <sub>2</sub> O	Air leaks
	Medications	Changes in vasoactive agent, sedative/analgesic dose (20%) <1 hr before and/or during IC
	NO, heliox, haemodialysis	Currently unclear, likely no effects
<b>Indirect calorimeter</b>	+/- Warm-up time +/- Calibration	According to manufacturer recommendations
	Steady-state period	VO <sub>2</sub> and VCO <sub>2</sub> variability ≥ 10%
	RQ between 0,67 and 1	See Table 3 for possible causes of RQ<0,67 or >1.2
	Disinfection after measurements	In all case of infection particularly with multi resistant micro-organisms (pseudomonas, tuberculosis, etc...)

**Table 3: Normative values of row parameters from indirect calorimetry.** These values are valid for Body Mass Index (BMI) between 18,5 and 30kg/m<sup>2</sup>, but do not apply to ICU patients who have much higher VO<sub>2</sub> and VCO<sub>2</sub> values

<b>VO<sub>2</sub></b>	90-120 ml/min/m <sup>2</sup>
<b>VCO<sub>2</sub></b>	50-90 ml/min/m <sup>2</sup>
<b>RQ</b>	Physiological between 0,67 and 1.2, dependent on substrate oxidation (0,7 for fat; 0,8 for proteins; 1 for carbohydrates)
<b>EE</b>	20 – 45 kcal/kg/day
<b>Coefficient of variation (VO<sub>2</sub>, VCO<sub>2</sub>)</b>	≤ 10% of variation for 30 min of measurement

**Table 4: Possible causes altering IC results**

<b>IC results</b>	<b>Clinical conditions</b>	<b>Metabolic conditions</b>
Increased $VCO_2$ and $RQ > 1.2$	Overfeeding Hyperventilation	Hypermetabolism
Increased $VO_2$	Overfeeding Sepsis, hyperthermia Agitation Hyperthyroidism Pheochromocytoma	Hypermetabolism
Decreased $VCO_2$ and $RQ < 0,67$	Underfeeding Air leaks $\beta$ blockers	Hypometabolism
Decreased $VO_2$	Underfeeding Hypothermia Sleeping Hypothyroidism Myorelaxant treatment, paralysis, coma Sedative agents	Hypometabolism

**Table 5: Examples of clinical cases**

Type	History	IC values	Q1: Is the result of this indirect calorimetry reliable?	Q2: Was the indirect calorimetry performed at an appropriate time?	Q3: Which energy target to prescribe? Can the measure value be applied?
1- IC U	A 26-yr old male weighing 90 kg is admitted in ICU after a traumatic brain injury. He is mechanically ventilated (FiO <sub>2</sub> =60%, PEEP=8cmH <sub>2</sub> O), with no vasoactive agents, sedation with propofol, and pain controlled with morphine. Ventricular drain for intracranial pressure monitoring and cerebrospinal fluid drainage is inserted. The patient is continuously fed with enteral nutrition with total caloric intake of 1,500 Kcal/day.	IC is performed on day 2 after ICU admission. During the measurement, the patient is normothermic and agitated. The measurement is made over a period of 30min. IC results are: VO <sub>2</sub> =490 ml/min, VCO <sub>2</sub> = 350 ml/min, RQ = 0.75, REE = 3560 Kcal/day, the coefficient variation in the first 5min was 14% for VO <sub>2</sub> and VCO <sub>2</sub> .	No, the coefficient variation is out of acceptable limits for VO <sub>2</sub> and VCO <sub>2</sub> (>10%), probably due to the physical agitation during the measurement.	The measurement was performed two days after ICU admission, i.e. still during the early phase of the acute illness, when the endogenous energy production covers most of the energy needs (see Figure 5). Careful interpretation of REE by IC in this phase is necessary for an adequate prescription of energy in order to avoid overfeeding.	During this transitory period (0 to 5 days post ICU admission), a safe strategy is to use the weight-based equation, 20-25 kcal/kg/day, with a caloric target of 2250 kcal/day. The IC measurement should be repeated on day 3-4 after ICU admission to adjust caloric intakes. This clinical case highlights the time wasting of IC measure during the first days of ICU admission.
2 - I C U	A 68-year-old man admitted to the ICU for respiratory failure due to nosocomial pneumonia, pulmonary adenocarcinoma diagnosed 3 years earlier: 60.5 kg, BMI 19.7 kg/m <sup>2</sup> . He was intubated upon admission. Enteral feeding was started after 36 hours. On day 4, while clinicians had prescribed 1200 kcal (20 kcal/kg), the patient's	The first IC was performed on day 4 in a calm patient: normocard (hr 75/min) with a minimal dose of noradrenalin, tachypneic (resp.rate 27 with a P/F ratio of 130), RQ= 0.75, VO <sub>2</sub> = 240 ml/min, VCO <sub>2</sub> = 181 ml/min = 1635 kcal (26.8 kcal/kg) – coefficient of variation 5%. On day 10, IC is repeated in a still intubated, calm and non-sedated patient: he is moderately tachypneic (rr	<b>Q1: What is the energy target to be prescribed on day 4?</b> Enteral nutrition prescription is increased to 1600 kcal based on IC results.	<b>Q2: What is the energy target to be prescribed on day 10?</b> Energy target is adapted to second IC result (1850 kcal), using high protein enteral nutrition with fiber.	<b>Q3: How do you interpret IC results?</b> The measured values reflect change over time in a more mobile patient and were used for prescription, The change in RQ from 0.75 to 0.86 correspond to a better fed state. A single IC on day 4 was not able to pick the evolution which might have been towards a lower value: but was higher in this case.

	intake had been progressed to 940 kcal/24h. He needed 1 u/hr of insulin to goal blood glucose 6-8 mmol/l.	22 /min), P/F 160, afebrile (36,7°C). He has received 1490 kcal last 24 hrs. RQ= 0.86, VO <sub>2</sub> = 268 ml/min, VCO <sub>2</sub> = 230 ml/min, EE = 1870 kcal (30.1 kcal/kg).			
			<b>Q1: Can this indirect calorimetry be considered reliable?</b>	<b>Q2: How do you interpret an RQ of 0.85?</b>	<b>Q3: What is the energy target to be prescribed?</b>
3 - A N O R E X I A	A 21-yr old woman with a diagnostic of anorexia nervosa is followed-up at the Nutrition Outpatients Clinic with a body mass index of 13.4kg/m <sup>2</sup> . Body composition assessment with DEXA reports: fat-mass = 1.3kg (4.4%) and fat-free mass = 31.7kg (95.6%).	REE measurement is performed with IC using canopy mode, in a quiet room, with stable temperature and humidity, in the morning, with empty stomach. Results obtained are: VO <sub>2</sub> =119ml/min, VCO <sub>2</sub> =95ml/min, RQ=0.85, REE = 809 Kcal/day, the coefficient variation in the first 5min was 5% for VO <sub>2</sub> and VCO <sub>2</sub> .	Yes, the measurement is performed in stable conditions and the coefficient variation is within acceptable limits for VO <sub>2</sub> and VCO <sub>2</sub> (<10%).	The RQ is within the normal range (0.67 to 1.2). It suggests the predominant use of protein as a fuel source and indicates that the patient is likely to require an increase caloric intake in the form of carbohydrates and lipids to reduce protein oxidation. Protein turnover and needs can be assessed by measuring 24 hours urinary nitrogen excretion. If this measurement is unavailable, it can be estimated by measuring urinary urea excretion which represents 85% of total nitrogen in human.	REE reflects the energy needs to maintain vital activities (e.g. heat production, cardiac, respiratory, secretory, cellular, etc). The patient is severely malnourished with a very low body mass index (<18,5kg/m <sup>2</sup> ). More than 809 kcal/day should be prescribed to achieve a positive energy balance and weight gain (see Figure 6). In this condition, the risk of refeeding syndrome is real and should be reduced by lower calorie intake to prevent a refeeding syndrome, starting at 10kcal/kg/day.
			<b>Q1: How do you interpret the IC results?</b>	<b>Q2: What is the energy target to be prescribed?</b>	
4 - O B E	A 38-yr woman with body mass index of 32kg/m <sup>2</sup> (82kg) is admitted for body weight loss (5kg during one month). Her total caloric intake is 1900 kcal/day. She has no regular physical activity. Body composition assessment with Dual	REE measurement is performed by IC using the canopy mode, in a quiet room, with stable temperature and humidity, in the morning, after an overnight fast. Results are as follows: VO <sub>2</sub> =245ml/min, VCO <sub>2</sub> =198ml/min, RQ=0.81, REE = 1677 Kcal/day, the	Body weight loss results from a negative energy balance, i.e. for this patient either by decreased energy intakes or increased TEE (see Figure 6).	We suggest to target 1700kcal/day and encourage physical activity to increase TEE and protect fat-free mass from catabolism.	

S I T Y	energy X-ray (DEXA) features 47.5% of fat-mass and 52.5% of fat-free mass.	coefficient of variation during the first 5min was 6% for VO <sub>2</sub> and VCO <sub>2</sub> .			
			<b>Q1: How do you interpret the IC results?</b>	<b>Q2: What is the energy target to be prescribed?</b>	
5 - E L D E R L Y	A 72-yr old man with BMI of 22,5kg/m <sup>2</sup> is hospitalized in orthopaedics for fracture of the femoral neck. Body composition assessment with DEXA reports 46% of fat-mass and 53% of fat-free mass.	IC is performed and reported: VO <sub>2</sub> =130ml/min, VCO <sub>2</sub> =105ml/min, RQ=0.80, REE = 1300 Kcal/day, the coefficient variation in the first 5min was 5% for VO <sub>2</sub> and VCO <sub>2</sub> .	Age-related decrease of VO <sub>2</sub> has been demonstrated in healthy individuals, as well as in injured and critically ill patients. This decrease is associated with a decline in cardiac output related which is defined as a decrease of muscle mass and function.	At least 1300kcal/day and 1.2 to 1.5g protein /kg/day should be prescribed in association with physiotherapy to avoid/limit muscle wasting.	

**Q1: How do you interpret the IC results?**

6 - S U R	A 32-yr old man with Crohn disease and BMI of 20kg/m <sup>2</sup> (body weight=59kg) is admitted for ulcerative ileitis with stenosis. He received parenteral nutrition before surgery. The surgeon performed an ileum and	IC measurement at day 2 shows REE=2200kcal (with RQ=0,89 and coefficient of variation for VO <sub>2</sub> and VCO <sub>2</sub> =6%). The patient was febrile (38°), hemodynamically stable, and has abdominal pain controlled with morphine.	The indirect calorimetry was performed 2 days after surgery, the patient was febrile (38°). Infectious complication of surgery could occur and lead to increased REE (hypermetabolism). Thus, careful interpretation of REE is necessary to avoid overfeeding. We suggest to repeat IC measurements on day 3-4
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G short right colonic resection  
E (5cm), with immediate  
R restoration of continuity. At  
Y day 1 after surgery,  
parenteral nutrition  
provided 1500kcal/day and  
enteral nutrition was started  
with 250kcal/day.

after surgery, and adjust the energy  
prescription as the clinical condition  
changes to accurately define the  
energy target.