

Best practice for screening of insulin pumps

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As today's security screening professionals work tirelessly to keep the travelling public safe, there is, on occasion, some confusion and variation of practices globally around the screening of insulin pumps at airport security checkpoints. In this article, we look at the issue, and suggest how airports can help.

Brief introduction to the insulin pump

An insulin pump is a small battery-operated device that delivers precise doses of rapid-acting insulin 24 hours a day to closely match a body's needs. The insulin pump has a compartment that holds a reservoir that is filled with insulin which is then infused into the body through tubing and a cannula inserted under the skin. The insulin pump must be constantly attached as disconnection causes blood sugars to rise and hyperglycaemia or ketoacidosis can rapidly develop, which can quickly become a life-threatening emergency.

Insulin pumps and airport security

Hospitals and insulin pump manufacturers advise that the electromagnetic radiation used by x-ray screening for carry-on or checked luggage and full-body airport scanners may interfere with the motors of insulin pumps, resulting in a potential impact on insulin delivery. As a result, these sources suggest that passen-

gers with insulin pumps should be subject to alternative security screening (for example, via pat down or explosive trace detection methods).

However, diabetes organizations, experts and affected passengers report that airport security officers are often unaware that passengers should not be asked to remove their insulin pump for screening, nor should pumps be subjected to x-ray screening or full-body scanners. This applies both to insulin pumps worn on the body or spares carried in hand baggage.

Regulation

Some countries have provision in regulation for dealing with medical aids, which allow for alternative screening methods such as a hand search or trace detection. However, procedures are not always well understood or implemented.

The Airport Operators Association in the UK has advised passengers to notify security personnel at the screening point of any medical screening requirements and ensure that they carry medical confirmation from their practitioner so that screening may be undertaken accordingly.

Next steps

ACI World will bring this issue to the next Aviation Security Panel in 2017, requesting that it is highlighted to regulators and included in guidance material. In the meantime, we would ask that airports review their procedures with regard to the screening of medical equipment and ensure that screeners are well informed.

For more information on ACI's work in airport security, visit www.aci.aero/security.

