There is some concern about the safety and efficacy of feeding hemodynamically unstable patients. We are not advocating feeding patients who are not fully resuscitated (as evidenced by rising lactate and escalating dose of vasopressors). Having said that, **being on vasopressors is NOT a contraindication to enteral feeds.** There is some evidence from animal studies that early EN has a positive effect on intestinal blood flow (1,2). In hemodynamically unstable critically ill patients, there is some evidence that nutrition gets absorbed and metabolized with no worsening effect on systemic measurements of oxygenation and perfusion (3).

Most importantly, there was a very recent large scale, multicenter, observational study that studied mechanically ventilated, vasopressor dependent patients and classified them as to whether they were fed within the first 48 hours (early group) or after 48 hours (after group). They used sophisticated statistical strategies (propensity scores) to adjust for potential confounding variables and showed that **vasopressor dependent patients fed early had a significant survival advantage compared to the delayed group** (4). Moreover, in a subgroup analysis, they even demonstrated that the sickest patients (on multiple vasopressors compared to those on one vasopressor only) had a significant survival advantage. Although this is not a randomized trial and there are no such trials that address this question specifically. Thus, the best evidence to date that supports the use of enteral feeding in vasopressor dependent patient.

**Key points:**
- Resuscitation is the priority
- No sense in feeding someone dying of progressive circulatory failure
- If on stable or declining doses of vasopressors, early enteral feeding may be beneficial
- Adopt strategies to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks associated with early enteral nutrition (e.g. trophic feeding)

Stay tuned for the next edition of the NIBBLE for a discussion of other important nutritional topics. For more information go to [www.criticalcarenutrition.com](http://www.criticalcarenutrition.com) or contact Lauren Murch at murchl@kgh.kari.net. Thanks for nibbling on our NIBBLE.