



FAI HAS TRANSPORTED 225 COVID PATIENTS IN ISOLATION UNITS: OUR MEDICAL STAFF PREFERS THE EPISHUTTLE

News / Business aviation



Since 2020 FAI Air Ambulance has saved 225 covid patients. Most of these patients have been isolated with the EpiShuttle. Safe patient transport from outbreak hotspots to areas with intensive care units available has proven a critical factor when fighting a pandemic.

Volker Lemke, Managing Director in FAI Air Ambulance, says that they investigated the market for single-unit isolation units and decided to acquire the industry-leading EpiShuttle in 2020: "We deployed the EpiShuttle as a security measure for our pilots. Contrary to our medical staff who also work in hospital settings, our pilots were not used to this kind of patient transport. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a lot of insecurity regarding transmission, routines, severity and so on."

Ellen Cathrine Andersen, CEO at EpiGuard says: "Patient transport to where ICU capacity is available has proven to be a crucial piece of the puzzle when handling a pandemic. Only when safe transport is in place can we utilize the full capacity of the entire health care system and ensure treatment for everyone."



Advantageous on long haul flights

After almost two years, the main rationale for deploying the EpiShuttle has changed in line with the development of the pandemic.

"Now all our staff appreciate using the EpiShuttle. It comes with different benefits and eases the pressure on the staff, not only the pilots. Our medical staff doesn't need to use PPE which is especially advantageous on long-haul flights. This reduces the risk of fatigue and the risk of doing mistakes for the employees. They can also drink, eat and talk to each other in a more normal manner. Our medical staff prefers the EpiShuttle, that's no discussion. It makes their life easier," Lemke says.

Also, patients benefit from being transported inside an EpiShuttle.

"We see that the patients are more relaxed and comfortable when being transferred in an EpiShuttle. When the patient is awake and conscious, they have access to an iPad or iPod with music and movies. Of course, we make sure that we have some good and new movies downloaded," Lemke said.

The EpiShuttle provides a completely sealed and under pressurized barrier between an infectious patient and the surrounding environment, protecting both craft and professionals. At the same time, it allows patient monitoring and full intensive care treatment during transport, including emergency procedures like intubation. It is cost-efficient and can be disinfected and re-used for the next mission.

Holiday travelers and expats

FAI is specialized in long-haul transport and returning holiday travelers and expats back to their home country. The EpiShuttle is used mainly on long-haul transport missions, intercontinental flights that take up to 16-26 hours.

"We have done more than 80 percent of all covid-transport using the EpiShuttle, which clearly impresses the industry. We have always had the reputation of doing difficult and long flights, and the implementation of EpiShuttle has helped us maintain the top position in the industry. During the worst periods of the pandemic, we had an economic advantage compared to our competitors

as our fleet was still operative. The EpiShuttle helped us stay operative because of the safety advantage," Lemke says.

FAI's standard operation procedure on intensive care patient transport now involves the EpiShuttle. The isolation unit has also been used for transporting patients with tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

Best in class

Lemke believes that the past year's use of the single-unit isolation unit has helped FAI to maintain the top position in the industry.

For record 3rd-time FAI was awarded the Air Ambulance Company of the Year by ITIJ. The award is given to a company that has made an outstanding contribution to the global travel and health insurance industry over the past year.

"Last year was a rather difficult one compared to 2020. With the corona outbreak, the whole industry changed overnight. Now, two years out in the pandemic we see ourselves in a transition phase. The number of covid-transfers and severe cases are going down, as well as business and holiday travels are not back to normal frequency yet," Lemke says.

Best practice in contagious transport

Both in the aviation industry and at FAI there is an ongoing discussion regarding the best practice of transporting highly infectious patients. Volker Lemke is positive to develop a standard for international Covid-19 patient air transfers.

In FAI, everyone in the medical team has received training in using the EpiShuttle. For the medical staff working in FAI, most of them work one third the month in FAI and two thirds the month in hospitals and ICUs. Volker means that this is the ideal combination, so they don't lose their clinical experience.

"Our motivation is the brilliant combination of helping people, saving lives, stabilizing someone's health condition, and the fascinating world of aviation. We never have any idea of where we are flying tomorrow," Lemke, summarizes.



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