

I am a cardiologist and Professor of Medicine. In recent years I have attended passengers with cardiac emergencies on trans-Atlantic flights on three different U.S. carriers. Among these carriers, none had adequate equipment to deal with cardiac emergencies. For example, none had a functional stethoscope or blood pressure apparatus. (I now pack my own stethoscope in my carry-on luggage.) On one occasion the emergency oxygen supply lasted only 20 minutes; because the cabin oxygen level was comparatively low, I requested that the plane reduce altitude in order to maintain a cabin oxygen level equivalent to that found at an altitude of 8000 feet or less (the pilot complied).

Of the three carriers, the medical kit supplied by TWA was the least adequate. It does not surprise me, therefore, that TWA is lagging behind in providing automatic defibrillators on its planes (New York Times, July 30, 2000, Section 5, page 4).