

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR!



by Bill Barron
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"Thanks to hyperbaric oxygen treatment I still have my leg" said the retired Utah school teacher who suffered from a nonhealing diabetic foot wound. "I was scheduled to have my leg amputated and now I am walking without assistance. Most people will never appreciate how restricting a wheelchair can be and how wonderful it is to walk into a room full of children and sit down and read to them. If I hadn't taken a chance and begged my doctor to let me try hyperbaric treatment, I am sure my days with the kids would have been very limited. In fact, my goal of walking in this September's Walk for Diabetes sponsored by the American Diabetes Association, would never happen."

The September 8, 2005, issue of New York Teacher describes State University of New York (SUNY) nursing professors observing care of wounded U. S. Army reservists, in Fort Gordon, Georgia, in hyperbaric chambers. The publication says "the chamber helps wounds grow new tissue faster, while enhancing blood supply to the tissue with higher levels of oxygen."

These testaments note just a few ways an established treatment for the bends has become more main place in hospitals, private care facilities and stand-alone clinics.

Hyperbaric treatments take place in a chamber where a patient has 100 percent oxygen at pressure introduced to his system for approximately 60-90 minutes per session. It is non-intrusive and, in fact, reportedly a relaxing way to watch television or listen to music.

Medicare-approved treatments for nonhealing diabetic wounds, crush injuries, gangrene, carbon monoxide intoxication, soft-tissue radionecrosis and other conditions have led the medical profession to explore other maladies Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy can benefit.

Teri Pearse Rich, board chairman of a national hyperbaric company, has witnessed first hand the "miracles" of this treatment. "Seeing wounds heal, knowing the next step

would have been amputation, viewing the relief on the faces of the patients ending their treatment and going home to their loved ones, plus enabling caregivers to offer hope – all this makes Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy and its associated wound-care management worth their weight in gold." It is sad it takes a deadly event such as the recent West Virginia mining mishap, where 12 miners perished, to make the public aware of the value of hyperbaric treatments. When doctors made the decision to transport the incident's sole survivor, Randall McCloy, to a hyperbaric facility in Pennsylvania, they spared him from a lifetime of severe cognitive problems. Randall McCloy was able to share the distaster's final moments with the lost miners loved ones. Plus, he is able to talk about better mining safety issues.

The challenge to offer an informed choice of treatments depends on doctors. Many doctors are not trained in hyperbaric oxygen therapy and require extended clinical studies, yet Medicare and many insurance companies pay for all the 15 approved indications. The cost of amputation, hospital care and the extended rehabilitation easily triples the cost of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT). Subsequent care often requires outside resources and family members' commitment to assure the patient's well-being. This stresses not only finances, but also the family. Amputation is a last resort to consider only after failure of a series of hyperbaric dives (named after divers resurfacing too fast from deep seas dive) fails.

Resolving various contemporary maladies may ultimately rely on hyperbaric oxygen treatments. Clinical Research studies are in progress for applications in stroke, AIDs, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and Lyme disease. As more medical institutions add hyperbaric wound care to their repertoire, the greater the role the natural use of oxygen will play in assisting and even accelerating the body's healing processes.

Amazingly, using oxygen for advanced wound care has been right under our noses, yet overlooked for years. Such applications will continue to expand along with awareness of the nature of its power. In seeking responses and treatments of destructive diseases or illnesses, logic suggests it will inevitably come as a breath of fresh air.



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