

HEALTH & U

Oxygen to the Rescue

New technology in healthcare promises better cure, healthier life

Dr. Tarun Sahni



It took ten sessions to treat 40-year-old Sachin Sharma for deafness that occurred as a result of sudden hearing loss. Another ten sessions restored his hearing almost completely. In another instance, 24-year-old police officer Saurabh Yadav saved his leg from amputation after a severe injury following counter-insurgency operations in Arunachal Pradesh.

Thanks to technology advancements, new healthcare remedies such as hyperbaric oxygen therapy have helped scores of people recover from a wide variety of ailments when all other treatments failed. But what is hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBO)? The term is self-explanatory, with "hyperbaric" denoting higher pressure (more than the atmospheric pressure) and "oxygen therapy" explaining the fact that the treatment

involves administering oxygen under high pressure to patients. First introduced in the Indian private healthcare sector over ten months ago by Apollo Hospital in New Delhi, today the hospital's treatment center has cured over 600 patients with extremely satisfying results.

HEALTHY HEALING

HBO is primarily beneficial to people suffering from acute traumatic wounds and crush injuries whereby, if treated on time, a patient's life and limbs can be saved. Patients who have been suffering for years with non-healing ulcers due to diabetes, radiation or any other causes now have hope that

they will get well. All radiation induced complications such as bone necrosis, cystitis and enteritis are also benefited with HBO therapy.

PRESSURE THERAPY

As part of the therapy, the amount of oxygen carried in the blood is increased over ten times. When oxygen is given to patients, it is essentially carried as an attachment to hemoglobin and about 0.3 ml is

basic steps: Compression, treatment and decompression. While the patient rests, sleeps, reads a book or listens to music inside the chamber, oxygen is compressed to a prescribed level using hi-tech equipment in order to ensure that the compression is smooth and not harmful to the patient's ears or other nerves (due to increasing pressure).

In fact, it is this increased availability of "pure" oxygen and its higher-pressure gradient, which is responsible for the beneficial effects of hyperbaric oxygen. The use of hyperbaric oxygen is increasing the world over at an extremely rapid rate because scientific studies have revealed its efficacy in a large number of ailments. Recently, significant interest has also been shown in studying the promising role of HBO in strokes, cerebral palsy and other neuro-

logical conditions for which no specific treatment is currently available. The good news is that the cost of this treatment in India a fraction of international costs.

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carried as solution in plasma. During HBO however, the patient is given oxygen at a pressure twice that of the normal atmospheric pressure and the oxygen in the solution is increased to 5 to 6 ml. This is done in a specially designed chamber over three