

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy for Autism

The logic for using hyperbaric oxygen treatment for developmental disorders relates to the autoimmune and/or viral theory of these conditions.

Hyperbaric oxygen has been studied for autoimmune disorders and found to be helpful. Encephalitis, in this theory, is thought to be part of developmental disorders. The encephalitis can be initiated by viral infection, by exposure to vaccines, and/or by other autoimmune processes (the result of exposure to abnormal opioid-like substances from the opioid excess hypothesis, for example).

Treatment Study

Patients with viral encephalitis from ages 1 yr. to 11 yrs. were treated with hyperbaric oxygen therapy. The treated group consisted of 47 patients, 28 male and 19 female. The control group consisted of 45 patients, 24 male and 21 female. Viral encephalitis presents a model for the inflammation that may be part of autism. Studies such as this provide a basis for the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy for autism. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy was provided at 1.8 atm abs for 80 minutes daily for 10 days in a pure oxygen monoplace unit. The control group received supportive therapy with appropriate drugs.

Results:

Table 1. Comparison of the Curative Effect of the High Pressure Oxygen Treatment Group and the Control Group

Treatment Study

Group	Cases	Cured	Effective	Ineffective	Total	Effective #	Effective # (%)	# (%)	# (%)	(%)
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Treatment	47	18 (38.3)	25 (55.3)	3 (6.4)	93.6					
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Control	45	8 (17.8)	20 (44.5)	17 (37.8)	62.2					
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P Value <0.05 N.S. <0.0001 <0.01

Clearly, hyperbaric oxygen therapy is effective for the treatment of encephalitis in childhood.

Hyperbaric oxygen has an important role in the treatment of brain injury, and perhaps also developmental disorders. (See: The role of Hyperbaric-Oxygen Therapy for intra-cranial pathology in Intensive Care). Since we know of no data on the use of hyperbaric oxygen for developmental disorders, and, since patients are doing these therapies, we will endeavor to review what is known, so that parents can at least make informed choices.

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