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Early hyperbaric oxygen therapy for retinal artery occlusion.

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PURPOSE: To assess whether early hyperbaric oxygenation (HBO) treatment has a beneficial effect on visual results after retinal artery occlusion (RAO). **METHODS:** A comparative retrospective study in which medical records of all HBO-treated RAO patients in our department were reviewed and compared with matched RAO patients not treated by HBO (from a different medical center). Mean visual acuity (VA) at completion of treatment, the presence or absence of improvement in VA between admission and discharge, and the mean change in VA between admission and discharge were noted. All patients treated by HBO had treatment no later than 8 hours after the beginning of visual symptoms. **RESULTS:** Mean VA at discharge was 0.2981 (6/20) in the treated group and 0.1308 (6/46) in the control group ($p < 0.03$). In the treated group, 82.9% had an improvement in VA between admission and discharge, compared with 29.7% of the control group ($p < 0.00001$). Mean improvement in VA was 0.1957 in the treated group and 0.0457 in the control group ($p < 0.01$). Differences in outcome measures between treatment and control groups were found to reflect the difference between treated and untreated hypertensive patients. No difference was found between treated and untreated non-hypertensive patients. **CONCLUSIONS:** Early HBO therapy appears to have a beneficial effect on visual outcome in patients with RAO. Further large-scale prospective controlled studies are needed to confirm this.

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