

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HYPERBARIC OXYGEN THERAPY IN THE TREATMENT OF COMPLEX REGIONAL PAIN SYNDROME

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy) is a debilitating neurological disorder usually precipitated by a trauma to a limb. The clinical manifestations include swelling of an extremity, severe hyperalgesic pain, changes in skin temperature and color, and weakness. Frequently it is associated with trophic changes exemplified by loss of hair, and abnormal nail growth. This study examines the ability of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy to reduce the symptoms commonly seen with this disorder in five consecutive patients.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

Five consecutive patients (1 male, 4 female) ages 24 to 62 with signs and symptoms of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome confirmed by an independent pain management specialist, and with disability present for 2 to 14 years despite aggressive medical management with stellate ganglion blocks, spinal stimulators, narcotic analgesics were referred for HBO2 treatment. Each patient received between 20 to 30 treatments at 2.4 ATA for 90 minutes.

## **RESULTS:**

All five patients had resolution of the hyperalgesic pain and swelling with return of normal limb sensation, temperature, color, strength and function. Two of the five have returned to gainful employment.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy reverses the reflex vasomotor disturbances thereby reducing swelling and enhancing oxygen perfusion of the effected tissues in patients with complex regional pain syndrome. HBO2 should be considered as a treatment option in patients with this disorder.