

## **HIV Management: Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBO)**

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of the SEARCH Alliance-funded study was to evaluate the efficacy of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy in treating peripheral neuropathy ("pins and needles" numbness of the hands and feet caused by nerve damage due to HIV and compounded by toxicity's caused by AZT, ddI and ddC).

In Hyperbaric Oxygen (HBO) Therapy, the patient breathes 100 percent oxygen continually or intermittently while the pressure of the treatment chambers is increased to a point higher than sea level pressure. It is commonly used to treat burns, carbon monoxide poisoning and certain breathing disorders.

### **Status:**

Although the test designed to measure proper nerve conduction (electro micrograph) did not prove objective benefit of this therapy, seven of the ten trial participants reported subjectively that the numbness and lethargy associated with peripheral neuropathy had diminished.

Earlier studies of HBO, performed at the University of Maryland, showed that HBO was effective in the prevention of opportunistic infections (OI's) in patients with extremely low immune function. While both the SEARCH study and the University of Maryland study demonstrated the efficacy of HBO for certain HIV complications, the extremely high cost and inconvenience of HBO chambers probably do not make it a viable therapy for a large population of people with HIV disease.

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