

Rapid Recovery Hyperbarics

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Susan Rodriguez, a certified hyperbaric specialist from Rancho Cucamonga, California, believes that to understand how HBOT works for CRPS, you need to understand the disease itself. “CRPS is neurological in nature and yet it manifests itself in physical symptoms,” she says. “What that means is that the disease needs to be treated with two approaches. One goal is to restore circulation, reduce inflammation or edema, and remove the swelling in affected limbs so the limbs can live. The other goal—if you want to eliminate the disease—is to work on the brain.”

If you were to stub your toe, for example, the central nervous system would tell your brain that your toe hurts. This pain is rooted in a physical injury. But sometimes trauma and inflammation mysteriously trigger a reaction from the sympathetic nervous system, which is a different part of the brain. With CRPS, pain is read through sensors in the sympathetic nervous system. (The sympathetic nervous system is what is activated in phantom leg pain, for example.) “Hyperbaric Oxygenation Therapy, however, can make the switch in the brain back to the central nervous system,” Rodriguez says. Under a doctor’s direction, she treats both the affected limb and the brain by different atmospheric pressures when the patient is inside the chamber.

“Different undersea depths work on different parts of the body,” she explains. “Deeper depths (up to 33 to 45 feet undersea) work more on tissue and bone, while milder hyperbarics (such as 18 to 24 feet undersea) work on the brain. Since we are working on both things, I take patients to all those levels. Almost always, the first symptom to come is the last to go. And then the symptoms are gone!”

Rodriguez learned about the effectiveness of HBOT therapy in treating CRPS first hand, when her husband Patrick was diagnosed in the mid-1990s following surgery. Because she had already been working in this field, they decided to try Hyperbaric Oxygenation Therapy to treat his CRPS. Not only is Patrick working today, but he has become a certified hyperbaric technician. The couple opened Rapid Recover Hyperbarics in 1998, with Donald Underwood, DO, MD, JD, serving as medical director.

A physician should review all aspects of a patient’s medical history before starting therapy. There are a few medical conditions that may prevent an individual from receiving HBOT — either permanently (certain lung and heart disorders) or temporarily (sinus infections, fevers).

“I have seen some very dramatic improvements,” says Rodriguez. “In some cases we have seen improvements to the point of a remission.” she says. “Nothing works for everyone, but I’ve seen this work for many people if they stick with it.”

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