

Hyperbaric Oxygen Offers New Hope for Stroke Victims

On October 31, 1998, Carmine Fasciani suffered a disabling stroke in Mount Kisco, New York. He was 63 years old at the time and was not expected to live. With that kind of stroke, only one in five persons recovers enough to live alone. He owned his own security business and specialized in guarding celebrities.

"He appeared to be in excellent condition before the stroke," says Linda Feinberg, a long-time friend of Fasciani's. "He had extensive conventional therapy for the residual effects of the stroke and improved to some degree. However, the real improvement began in March 2000 with hyperbaric oxygen (HBO) therapy.

"We came to the Ocean Hyperbaric Neurologic Center in Lauderdale By The Sea, Florida, and Carmine had 40 treatments in a row, one a day. When he started the treatment, he could only walk a block and since the oxygen treatments, he has improved at least 70 percent. He is able to drive his van, goes up and down the stairs and his speech has improved dramatically."

Before the hyperbaric oxygen, Feinberg would ask her friend if he wanted to eat chicken, fish or a hamburger, and he would grunt yes or no to the questions. After his first hyperbaric treatment, he responded, "If you don't mind, I'd like to go out for Chinese."

Fasciani emphasizes, "The other therapy was helpful, but hyperbaric oxygen has made major improvement and I keep getting better. I owe everything to Linda."

Each year, approximately 750,000 Americans have a new or recurrent stroke and nearly 160,000 die each year as a result. Every 45 seconds in the United States someone experiences a stroke and about one-third of all stroke survivors will have another stroke within five years. Four million Americans are living with the effects of stroke, which is one of the leading causes of adult disability. The cost of strokes in the United States is \$30 billion annually. Strokes have a disproportionate effect on women. Women account for approximately 43 percent of the strokes that occur each year, yet they account for 62 percent of stroke deaths. Strokes kill more than twice as many American women every year as breast cancer.

"The stroke is caused by a sudden loss of blood and oxygen to a specific area of the brain, which kills off the

central core of brain cells, says Richard Neubauer, M.D., medical director of the Ocean Hyperbaric Neurologic Center. "With the death of these cells and the swelling it causes, blood and oxygen are further isolated from the surrounding cells, which also then swell in a repeating cycle. When these marginal cells, which are viable but not functioning, can be revived with sufficient oxygen, substantial and sometimes dramatic recovery may result.

"Naturally, the sooner after the stroke the patient receives oxygen, the better chance of recovery. However, in one case, a woman who had suffered a stroke 14 years prior to hyperbaric oxygen therapy was greatly improved."

In hyperbaric oxygen therapy, a patient is placed in a chamber and the pressure is increased between 15 feet to 66 feet below the surface of water and he or she receives pure oxygen for one hour.

It has been scientifically documented that many times, following serious injury, the brain tissue surrounding the injury contains brain cells that have been stunned, but not killed. These idling cells lie in a dormant state between the damaged and the healthy parts of the brain. It is the stunned cells that hyperbaric oxygen therapy can help.

The brain consumes 20 percent of the oxygen in the body even though it makes up only two percent of the weight, so it is understandable why the lack of oxygen in brain cells has such a dramatic effect on the body. Indeed, the brain receives 15 percent of the cardiac output.

Dr. Neubauer is internationally recognized as a pioneer in the use of hyperbaric oxygen for the treatment of stroke, coma, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and other neurological conditions.

A veteran in all phases of the healing method, he speaks from wide experience about the life-saving properties of hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Spotlighting the treatment's possibilities for emergencies, Dr. Neubauer points to a little understood potential dimension in community healthcare.

"Every city of any size should have a hyperbaric chamber for emergency cases," he believes. "We can save drowning victims with this method. Arms, legs or fingers that have been cut off will often be replanted

