

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Can Diminish Fibromyalgia Syndrome – Prospective Clinical Trial

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Citation: Efrati S, Golan H, Bechor Y, Faran Y, Daphna-Tekoah S, Sekler G, et al. (2015) Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Can Diminish Fibromyalgia Syndrome – Prospective Clinical Trial. PLoS ONE 10(5): e0127012. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0127012

Academic Editor: Mario D. Cordero, University of Sevilla, SPAIN

Received: April 11, 2014

Accepted: April 8, 2015

Published: May 26, 2015

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Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

Funding: The study was supported by the research fund of Assaf-Harofeh Medical Center. EB-J and G-S were supported by a grant from the Tauber Family Funds and the Maguy-Glass Chair in Physics of Complex Systems. The funders had no role in study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript.

Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Abstract

Background

Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) is a persistent and debilitating disorder estimated to impair the quality of life of 2–4% of the population, with 9:1 female-to-male incidence ratio. FMS is an important representative example of central nervous system sensitization and is associated with abnormal brain activity. Key symptoms include chronic widespread pain, allodynia and diffuse tenderness, along with fatigue and sleep disturbance. The syndrome is still elusive and refractory. The goal of this study was to evaluate the effect of hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) on symptoms and brain activity in FMS.

Methods and Findings

A prospective, active control, crossover clinical trial. Patients were randomly assigned to treated and crossover groups: The treated group patients were evaluated at baseline and after HBOT. Patients in the crossover-control group were evaluated three times: baseline, after a control period of no treatment, and after HBOT. Evaluations consisted of physical examination, including tender point count and pain threshold, extensive evaluation of quality of life, and single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) imaging for evaluation of brain activity. The HBOT protocol comprised 40 sessions, 5 days/week, 90 minutes, 100% oxygen at 2ATA. Sixty female patients were included, aged 21–67 years and diagnosed with FMS at least 2 years earlier. HBOT in both groups led to significant amelioration of all FMS symptoms, with significant improvement in life quality. Analysis of SPECT