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Use of hyperbaric oxygen in rheumatic diseases: case report and critical analysis

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Hyperbaric oxygen has been used in patients with rheumatic disease for many years without reports of untoward or unusual complications for a variety of non-rheumatic indications. Recent evidence that hyperbaric oxygen inhibits the actions of certain cytokines, acts as an immune modulator and may help cognitive dysfunction has resulted in a re-examination of its potential role in rheumatic diseases. A case report of a lupus/scleroderma crossover patient is presented whose cognitive dysfunction improved after hyperbaric oxygen therapy. The history of hyperbaric oxygen and its physiology are related, along with a focused review of its effects on the immune and central nervous systems. Areas which might warrant further consideration by rheumatologists are outlined, as well as areas of concern.