Pain improvement in rheumatoid arthritis with hyperbaric oxygen: report of three cases

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Abstract

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic, erosive, symmetrical inflammatory disease that can progress to synovial destruction, severe disability and premature mortality. Immunotherapies, while beneficial, can cause significant adverse events. Three patients with RA treated in our facility with hyperbaric oxygen (HBO_2) for unrelated diagnoses all reported significant but unanticipated improvement in RA-related pain, increased activity and improved sleeping patterns. Two improved while continuing traditional RA medications; the other patient had all RA meds held due to cancer and postoperative wound healing problems. The significant symptomatic improvement in these three patients led us to hypothesize that HBO_2 for patients with RA may result in decreased joint pain, increased activity level, improvement in sleeping patterns and possibly a decreased need for standard rheumatologic medications, effectively reducing or avoiding the effects of immunosuppression. A clinical trial is planned to objectively assess these findings.

Keywords: hyperbaric oxygen; rheumatoid arthritis.

Conflict of interest statement
The authors of this paper declare no conflicts of interest exist with this submission.