

LIFELINE

Oxygen to the rescue

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A 24-YEAR-OLD police officer was shot in the leg during counter-insurgency operations in Arunachal. Doctors in Arunachal and Kolkata told him his leg would have to be amputated. The officer was shifted to Apollo Hospital in Delhi. A successful vascular surgery coupled with a new therapy — the Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy or HBO2 helped in saving his leg tissue. Now he can think of walking again.

Sixty-year-old SS underwent surgery for brain malignancy which was followed by radiation therapy. Radiation led to brain edema and deterioration of consciousness. After five days of HBO2 therapy, he was discharged.

Although popular in the West for critically ill patients since the late 80s, only a few hospitals such as the Naval Hospital in Mumbai, the Air Force Hospital in Bangalore and the Indraprastha Apollo Hospital in Delhi offer HBO2 therapy.

"Most dramatic and fulfilling results were seen in trauma patients, gangrene, radiation illnesses and those with sudden

hearing loss," says Dr Tarun Sahni, senior consultant at the Apollo Hospital and a pioneer in the field in India. HBO2 leads to reduced mortality and morbidity in selected cases and also results in significant savings to the patient due to faster recovery and lesser hospital stay.

What is Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy? Hyper means higher pressure (more than atmospheric pressure) Oxygen Therapy. During therapy the patient breathes 100 per cent oxygen at a pressure higher than the atmospheric pressure. Treatment is given in 'chambers', which can deliver oxygen concentrations to tissues at levels higher than in any existing method.

In most cases, HBO2 does not have side effects. Sometimes temporary changes in vision, especially among older people, have been reported. Nearsightedness can develop but will return to normal at the end of the treatment. Minor ear problems may occur during treatment but are temporary.

A treatment session lasts two hours. This includes 90 minutes in the chamber plus an hour for preparation before, and observation after.