

HBOT for Multiple Sclerosis in the U.K.

Research from various countries, for example, USA, Russia, Argentina, Italy, shows that oxygen therapy can help ease the symptoms of many people who have Multiple Sclerosis.

By breathing pure oxygen while under increased air pressure (hyperbaric oxygen) many people find relief from their symptoms and, it is thought, some help in slowing down the progression of the disease.

Centres in the UK were set up through the initiative of the former charity ARMS (Action and Research for Multiple Sclerosis), starting with the opening of the first charity-run centre in Dundee in 1983. Thereafter, fresh centres opened each year and there are now more than sixty such centres throughout the UK providing HBO therapy alongside many other services.

The centres started by designing their operations on information arising out of a controlled clinical trial in New York in 1980/1982. The results of the trial indicated both an improvement in symptoms and some protection from deterioration in more than half the people treated. The results of subsequent studies in Britain and abroad varied from a worst of 'no obvious change' to a variety of positive changes.

Many of the British centres have been providing the therapy continuously for the last 14 years while the newer ones have been open for upwards of 6 years. In that time they have safely provided around a million and a half individual sessions to people with MS and, in recent years, have also treated people with other conditions from gangrene and slow-to-heal wounds or sores, to children with cerebral palsy and injured sportsmen and women.

The therapy is easy to take although it requires going to a centre regularly, ideally 3 or 4 times a month. The therapy actually takes place in a metal chamber usually large enough to seat 6-8 people, who spend an hour under pressure, breathing pure oxygen through masks. They can read, knit, play cards and are easily able to talk with the operator at any time. Operators are skilled and trained, have access to a specialist medical adviser and a manual to which they work. The therapy does not offer a cure but many people have benefited from reduced severity of symptoms, as mentioned below, and an improved quality of life.

To repeat, HBOT is not a cure for MS - but it seems to offer effective help with such critical symptoms as fatigue, poor balance and mobility, sensory perception difficulties, incontinence and, in some cases, speech problems. People intending to take up the therapy are provided with more detailed information by the centre and a note for their GP so that their records will include their use of the therapy. The note will also indicate that you may be given advice on nutrition or offered neuro-physiotherapy and will ask the GP whether you have any contra-indicated conditions. Rarely, an MS symptom will deteriorate and therapy may be discontinued.