

suburban life



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**Oxygen Oasis
Hyperbaric
Wellness Center**
offers relief for
people grappling
with the debilitating
effects of
concussion.
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Dr. Benjamin Lam, Medical Director for Oxygen Oasis, checks on a patient in a monoplace HBOT chamber.

Patients are generally treated once a day, for up to 90 minutes per session, with most regimens requiring 20 to 40 sessions. All patients undergo a full medical evaluation before treatment, according to Jason Friel, Safety Director at Oxygen Oasis, and each patient is assessed by the company's Medical Director to ensure it is safe for them to be exposed to oxygen under pressure.

"We meet with our patients to gather information on their medical history," Friel adds, "and to gain and understanding of the symptoms they are experiencing. We make sure there are no concerns about them going into the chamber. We are accredited by The Joint Commission, meaning an outside organization comes in and audits us for safety and performance. For us, it comes down to our patient's

safety and quality of care."

Among those Americans suffering from traumatic brain injuries and who can benefit from HBOT are members of the military. Another population prone to concussions includes athletes who have suffered head injuries from sports such as football, hockey, lacrosse, and wrestling. The impact of repeated brain injuries is increasingly becoming known through high-profile cases of former professional athletes who develop serious neurological conditions as they age. For example, former football Hall of Famer Joe Namath has cited HBOT as a treatment that has helped restore blood flow and function to the sections of his brain that were damaged by concussions sustained during his playing career. Closer to home, former Philadelphia Flyer Brian Propp has undergone HBOT at Oxygen Oasis, and credits the treatments for his remarkable recovery from a major stroke.

Regardless of the patient, Bliss-Calkins and the rest of the staff at Oxygen Oasis derive great joy from witnessing the healing power of HBOT as it relieves their patients' concussion symptoms. While hospitals typically limit HBOT services to those approved by the FDA and reimbursed by government and private insurers, as a free-standing facility, Oxygen Oasis provides treatment for a wide range of conditions, making HBOT accessible to those suffering from concussion or traumatic brain injury. ■

MAKING AN IMPACT

Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center offers relief for people grappling with the debilitating effects of concussion.

by PHIL GIANFICARO | photography by JODY ROBINSON

Car crashes, falls, sports injuries—life can change in an instant. In any situation that involves a blow to the head, people often find themselves grappling with the aftermath of concussion, the most common type of traumatic brain injury. What follows are side effects that severely and negatively impact one's quality of life: headache, confusion, dizziness, ringing in the ears, nausea, vomiting, etc.

Conventional remedies such as rest, physical therapy, and pain medications may prove ineffective. When that happens, they may seek relief from these debilitating effects at an oasis in Langhorne: Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center, which provides hyperbaric oxygen therapy, or HBOT.

Although HBOT is not approved by the FDA for treatment of concussion, research has shown that it can dramatically enhance the body's ability to heal traumatic brain injuries by switching on genes specifically related to brain repair. It also increases the number of cells that migrate to sites of brain injury, thereby promoting the growth of new blood vessels in the brain.

"HBOT works by increasing the supply of energy to cells and repairing damaged tissues," says Victoria Bliss-Calkins, President and CEO of Oxygen Oasis. "Patients can evaluate blood flow and activity in their brain with functional brain imaging before and after HBOT as one way to visually see that the brain has repaired

itself. People with traumatic brain injuries are getting their lives back. We see it time and time again. There's a lot of documentation to show it works."

The Oxygen Oasis website, www.o2oasis.com, has a library of evidence-based studies and reviews of hyperbaric medicine. Among the latest studies is one from *British Medical Journal*, which analyzed 154 patients suffering from chronic neurocognitive damage due to traumatic brain injury who had undergone computerized cognitive evaluations pre- and post-HBOT treatment. The study concluded that HBOT was associated with significant cognitive improvements, correlating with increased activity in relevant areas of the brain.

HBOT is a noninvasive medical treatment that delivers 100 percent oxygen in a pressurized hyperbaric chamber. During each treatment, a patient sits or lies inside a hyperbaric oxygen chamber which varies in size; a monoplace chamber can accommodate either a single patient or parent and child together, while a multiplace chamber can accommodate multiple patients simultaneously. Oxygen Oasis offers both chamber options, each providing video entertainment. The treatment is painless, though patients may feel as though their ears are plugged from the increased pressure, similar to the pressure felt when flying or diving to the bottom of a pool.

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