

Nonprofit Funds Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy for Adults With Anoxic Brain Injury



By Denise Mercado, Founder Chambers for Hope, Jane Darnell, Community Relations, Chambers for Hope-PA

At the start of 2012, Ivan Gutierrez was a promising young student with dreams of attending law school. Weeks later, a devastating brain injury left him unable to walk, speak, or function independently. Now, through the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) treatments funded by the North Carolina-based nonprofit Chambers for Hope, Ivan is on a path to regaining the skills and senses he lost to anoxic brain injury, and his future continues to brighten.

Anoxic and hypoxic brain injuries

Anoxia is a condition in which the brain is completely deprived of oxygen. Hypoxia occurs when the flow of oxygen is partially impaired. Both conditions are very serious—brain cells start dying within a few minutes of being without oxygen.

Anoxic and hypoxic brain injuries typically result in a period of unconsciousness or coma and can have many causes, including, but not limited to, carbon monoxide exposure, near drowning, cardiac arrest, anesthesia problems, untreated allergic reactions, drug overdose, and choking or strangulation.

Lack of oxygen to the brain can cause symptoms ranging from mild to severe, affecting cognitive processes, memory, and impulse control, as well as causing movement and sensory problems. Severe hypoxia can affect the brain at any age and may result in necrosis and death or a persistent vegetative state.

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy for brain injury

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) is a medical treatment administered by delivering 100% oxygen at pressures greater than two to three times the normal atmospheric (sea level) pressure to a patient in an enclosed chamber. During a treatment, oxygen under pressure fills the hyperbaric chamber, increasing the oxygen concentration within a person's body 15 to 20 times normal at the cellular level. Increased oxygen tension accelerates the healing process and aids in recovery from certain conditions and maladies.

Testimonial: Ivan, age 26 January 14, 2012 was the date of my severe anoxic brain injury and the day I almost died.

While attending the University of Michigan, I began abusing prescription drugs. This deadly addiction led me to stray away from my family, my morals, and my education. I was once an ambitious student with hopes of attending law school. I spiraled down a path of self-destruction.

Through the grace of God and the work of medical professionals, I secured a second chance at life. My rebirth as a sober, self-aware young man has been an incredibly challenging and unpredictable journey. At every juncture, I was boxed in by the pessimistic, but statistically supported, expectations of numerous doctors and rehabilitation therapists. I, however, am not a prototype in a medical textbook. Consequently, predictions by doctors about my recovery have been largely incorrect. Furthermore, I refused to be limited by the educated guesses of those who do not appreciate that each brain injury is unique. In fact, each individual injury or disorder is distinct and deserves a fair chance at exhausting all possible remedies.

My family and I went against the recommendations of medical professionals who discouraged the use of innovative therapies such as hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT). The HBOT I received thus far has undeniably catapulted me to a new level of function. I was never supposed to survive, to speak, to see, to hear, to feel, to move, to have memory, or to be able to read and write. Contrary to the prognoses of several doctors, I acquired all of these skills and am ripe for making more remarkable progress. I feel incredibly enthusiastic about

the future and am forever grateful for the generous funding of Chambers for Hope.

My gains are unbelievable and completely inconsistent with anoxic brain injury recoveries. After completing only 50 of the 100 treatments my doctor recommended at Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center, I regained my ability to do mathematics, I have significantly improved my ability to speak clearly, and I have initiated the process to return to higher education. Additionally, I recently took my first steps with a walker. HBOT has enabled me to withstand more vigorous physical therapies such as gait training.

Oxygen Oasis has become like a second family for me. I enjoy each session because I know that it will bring me that much closer to actualizing my physical, cognitive, and educational goals. Additionally, the staff is wonderfully welcoming and professional. I look forward to future sessions, future achievements, and a future as the man I almost never had the chance to become. ~Ivan Gutierrez

Financial assistance for HBOT treatment for brain injuries

Treatment for brain injuries can cause a significant financial burden for families. Chambers for Hope (CFH) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to relieving that burden by offering financial

assistance for HBOT treatments. The CFH Network consists of quality HBOT clinics throughout the U.S.

Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center in Langhorne, PA, is a member of the CFH Network, serving the Bucks County and surrounding (Mid-Atlantic) area.

Oxygen Oasis obtained accreditation from the Joint Commission, meaning that it has met the highest standards for quality and safety of care. Physician oversight is one of the requirements for admission to the CFH Network. Medical Director Benjamin Lam, DO, FACOS, and his team—Scott Rosenthal, DO and Patrick Fall, DO—provide quality assessment and follow-up for all HBOT treatments.

For more information about CFH, visit their website at www.chambersforhope.org. To make a donation for Ivan's continued treatment, go to: <http://www.chambersforhope.org/pennsylvania1.html>



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