

Unexpected help for addicts

One of the most surprising uses of hyperbaric oxygen therapy is in aiding recovering drug addicts and alcoholics.

An article, published online in The Scotsman, focuses on oxygen as a treatment for addicts and people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They are pioneering hyperbaric oxygen therapy for such conditions at Castle Craig Hospital, an addiction clinic.

Reduces swelling

“HBOT has an anti-inflammatory effect and it also stimulates the production of stem cells and replaces any damaged ones, for example in the liver, brain or pancreas. It also helps with a range of neurological complaints such as MS, autism, cerebral palsy and mild traumatic brain injury, and because the effect is also anti-viral and anti-bacterial, it is good for the skin, healing scars and zapping acne.

At Castle Craig, HBOT is used to treat addicts whose bodies have been subject to tissue damage from years of alcohol or drug misuse. While there are many chambers operated by charity for MS users, Castle Craig is the only place in the UK using HBOT to treat addiction. Patients referred by the NHS spend an hour at a time in the chamber wearing a mask, allowing oxygen to be dissolved in the bloodstream, helping white blood cells kill bacteria, reducing swelling and allowing new blood vessels to grow more rapidly in damaged tissue.”

Idea from an article

Chairman of Castle Craig Peter McCann got the idea for starting HBOT for addicts, when he read an article about how the treatment may be useful for Korsakoff’s syndrome, a type of brain damage caused by alcohol consumption. "Alcoholics who have drunk for many years quite often lose brain function because it damages the pre-frontal cortex and kills cells, or sends them into sleeping mode. That part of the brain is to do with making decisions, learning from experience and if that's impaired they can't reason, which is why they don't change their ways. It's a growing problem in Scotland and younger people are turning up with it," he said in the article.

"The pre-frontal cortex can be repaired in time by exercise, stimulation of the brain, good food and good sleep. Add HBOT to that and it will accelerate the process."

Read more about what therapists notice at Castle Craig and how the patients respond to the treatment [here](#) or by following the link under References.

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References:

[The big O2: Oxygen is proving revolutionary therapy for addicts.](#) Published online in The Scotsman Jul 18, 2010.