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Title: Hyperbaric oxygen and the cancer patient: a survey of practice patterns

Authors: Feldmeier, JJ
Heimbach, RD
Davolt, DA
Brakora, MJ

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Abstract: A questionnaire was sent to 179 clinical hyperbaric medicine facilities to survey treatment policies and referral patterns for patients with a history of malignancy. Eighty-five surveys were returned. Most respondents indicated that they would accept patients with a history of malignancy for either adjuvant or emergent hyperbaric oxygen (HBO). Depending on specific circumstances, from about one third to one half of respondents believed that such patients should be informed of a theoretical potential for tumor acceleration or reactivation. An overwhelming majority had not personally attended nor had they been told by colleagues of cases of patients whose malignancy had been activated or accelerated by HBO. A large majority felt that referring physicians did not believe that HBO was carcinogenic, and that referrals were not prevented by such concerns. Seven percent believed that HBO is potentially carcinogenic. Forty-two percent of respondents felt that they might be at risk for malpractice litigation if a patient had reactivation or acceleration of a malignancy. Among respondents to the questionnaire, there is a consensus that HBO does not have cancer-promoting or accelerating properties.

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