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From professional athletes to accident survivors, people affected by concussion and other forms of traumatic brain injury heal with help from **Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center.**

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Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center is a Joint Commission-accredited facility staffed by fully trained and certified medical professionals.

From professional athletes to accident survivors, people affected by concussion and other forms of traumatic brain injury heal with help from Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center.

by **BILL DONAHUE**

Game Changer

“I don’t feel so good. I can’t see straight.”

Steven Beagelman uttered these words a few years ago while driving his daughter to Lancaster, where she was scheduled to play in a softball tournament the following day. His driving had become so erratic that his vehicle flashed a warning light that read: TAKE A BREAK. He promptly pulled over and let his daughter get behind the wheel—she had gotten her driver’s license four days prior—for the remainder of the trip to the hotel.

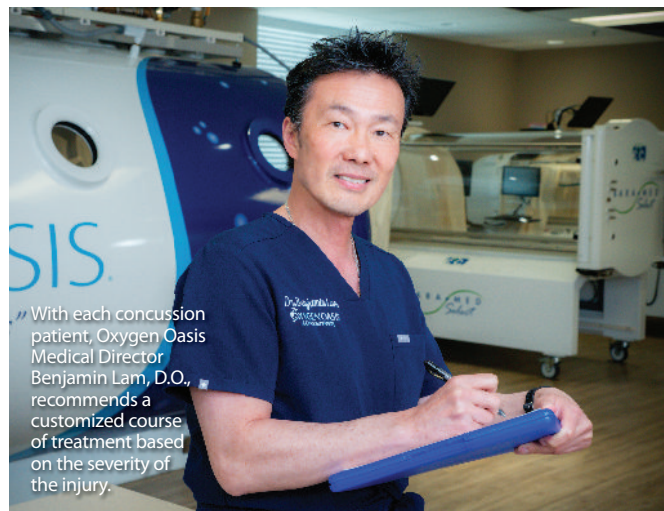
He attributed his troubles to a hectic schedule, so he went to bed early and slept fitfully. He woke up at 4 a.m., the whole room spinning. After phoning his wife back home in Doylestown, he decided to drive back to Bucks County and get checked out at a hospital close to home. His diagnosis: concussion, a mild form of traumatic brain injury.

Looking back, the injury should have come as no surprise to Beagelman. The day before the drive to Lancaster, he had been

at an indoor sports training facility with the softball team he coaches, standing behind the netting where a softball pitcher and catcher were practicing. An errant 60-mph pitch caught Beagelman in the head.

The blow, which knocked him unconscious, would result in the first of many concussions Beagelman would endure. Some have been related to his part-time career as a softball coach, and others have stemmed from seemingly minor “mini hits” that could happen to anyone who leads an active lifestyle.

Symptoms of acute head injury, such as the concussions Beagelman has sustained, may include confusion, amnesia, nausea and vomiting, ringing in the ears, loss of consciousness, and even convulsions. Delayed symptoms may include irritability, headaches (including migraines), depression, sleep disorders, and problems with concentration



“With each concussion patient, Oxygen Oasis Medical Director Benjamin Lam, D.O., recommends a customized course of treatment based on the severity of the injury.”

and memory. The symptoms often linger, and significantly impair one’s quality of life as a result.

To assist in his recovery, Beagelman’s vestibular therapist offered a recommendation: hyperbaric oxygen therapy, also known as HBOT, which delivers 100 percent pure oxygen to a patient in a pressurized hyperbaric chamber. Considered a form of noninvasive wound healing, medical-grade HBOT has been used to treat everything from sports injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder to multiple sclerosis and Parkinson’s disease to autism spectrum disorder and stroke.

Despite his skepticism, Beagelman visited Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center in Langhorne. He liked what he saw—a Joint Commission-accredited facility, immaculately clean, led by fully trained and certified medical professionals—so he agreed to try it.



Patients have come to Oxygen Oasis seeking relief for everything from sports injuries and multiple sclerosis to autism spectrum disorder and stroke.

“I saw some improvements after a couple of treatments, so I started going twice a week,” he says. “It really helps you feel good, and the place is as clean as you can imagine. It’s like going to the spa. I’ve met other people there who have lots of other ailments and health issues, and they say [the therapy] has helped tremendously. I wasn’t always a believer in HBOT, but I am now.”

Each “dive” typically lasts one hour, during which recipients are immersed in 100 percent oxygen at one and a half to three times the normal atmospheric pressure. By increasing the oxygen concentration in the body at 15 to 20 times greater than normal at the cellular level, HBOT accelerates the body’s ability to heal, according to Victoria Bliss-Calkins, president and CEO of Oxygen Oasis.

“A concussion is a wound you cannot see,” she says. “Depending on how the injury occurred and what part of the brain has been injured, a concussion can affect different things; one person might experience migraines, whereas someone else will have trouble sleeping, an inability to concentrate, or irritability.

“HBOT reduces inflammation and causes angiogenesis, or the ability to create brand new blood vessels to the brain, which helps to heal the injury,” she continues. “The earlier you treat it, the quicker the recovery, but we’ve seen people have results years after an injury occurred.”

Gaining Traction

HBOT is painless, though Oxygen Oasis Safety Director Jason Friel suggests the increased pressure can feel similar to that of flying in an airplane or diving to the bottom of a pool. The simple act of clearing one’s ears—similar to what one might do during takeoff or after swimming—can remedy the sensation.



Oxygen Oasis offers HBOT in two distinct options: monoplaces, a smaller chamber that can accommodate a single patient (or a parent and child together); or multiplaces, a significantly larger chamber that accommodates multiple patients simultaneously. Each chamber provides video entertainment, such as HBO, Netflix, and Hulu, to keep patients entertained for the duration of treatment.

Oxygen Oasis Medical Director Benjamin Lam, D.O., recommends a customized course of treatment based on the severity of the injury. The majority of concussion patients go through 40 to 80 treatments, though the most severe cases might receive 120 treatments, with short breaks between dive intervals.

Bliss-Calkins suggests HBOT continues to gain increasing traction in professional sports as a “game-changing” modality for healing traumatic brain injury and other sports-related injuries. One example is NFL Hall of Famer Joe Namath, who completed 120 dives and essentially used HBOT to help “rebuild his brain” after multiple head injuries

sustained throughout his playing career.

While athletes who have played in the NFL and NHL have frequented Oxygen Oasis, Bliss-Calkins says the therapy is “not just for the rich and famous.” For example, the facility’s diverse patient mix includes many high school and college athletes.

As for Beagelman, his HBOT treatment at Oxygen Oasis helped. He still coaches softball, including the girls’ JV team at CB East. He leads SMB Franchise Advisors, a hugely successful consulting firm based in Doylestown. He even pens the occasional business column for Forbes.com. After completing his HBOT treatments, his MRI revealed an image of a healthy and active brain, with little evidence of past traumas.

“I’m a workaholic and a coachaholic, and if time were not an issue, I would do it all,” he says. “Concussions forced me to slow down a little, but didn’t stop me.”

The only thing slowing him down today—and the only thing keeping him from coaching—is the statewide lockdown to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. ■



OXYGEN OASIS HYPERBARIC WELLNESS CENTER

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