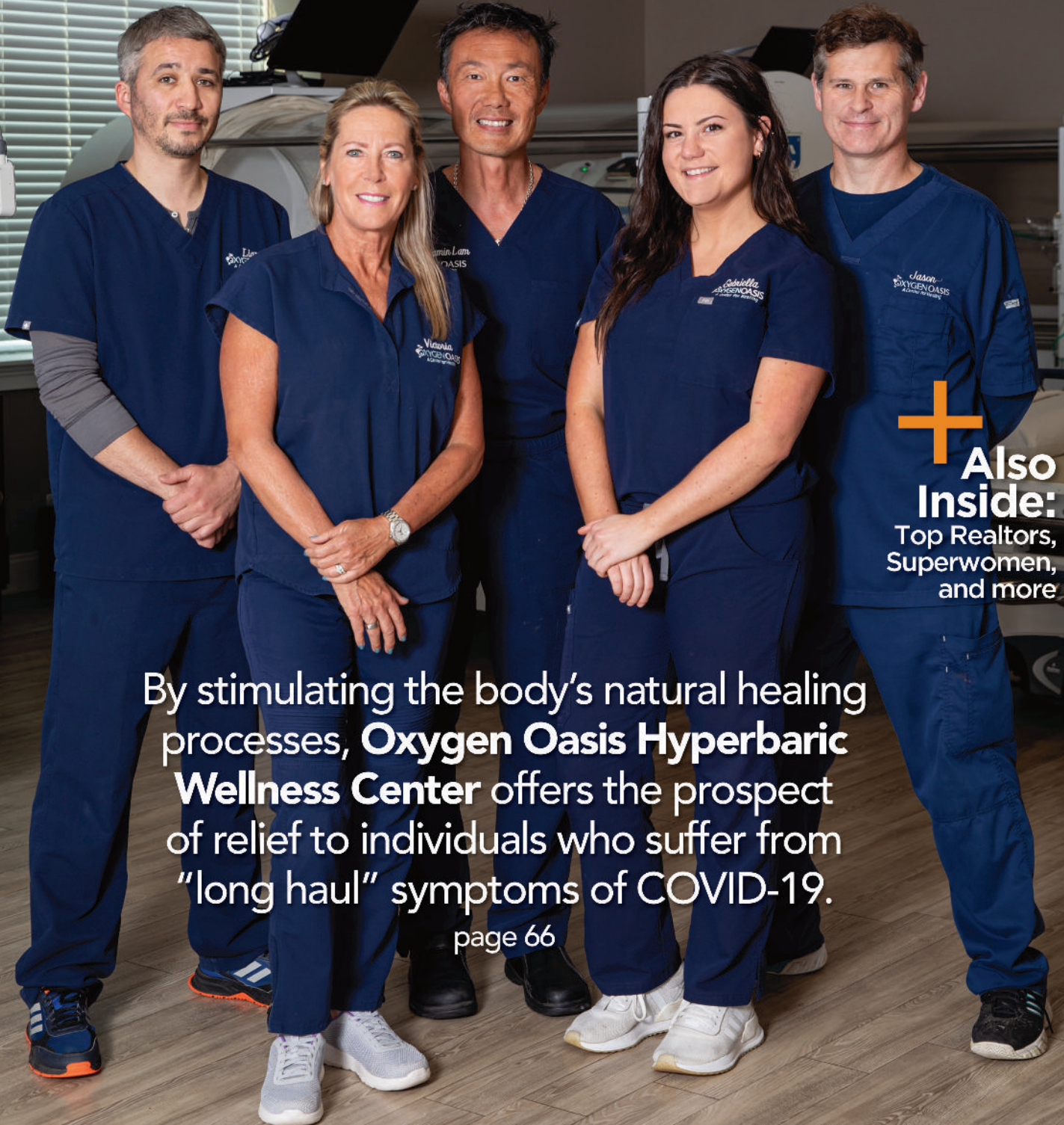


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By stimulating the body's natural healing processes, **Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center** offers the prospect of relief to individuals who suffer from "long haul" symptoms of COVID-19.

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# STRENGTH from Within

By stimulating the body's natural healing processes, **Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center** offers the prospect of relief to individuals who suffer from "long haul" symptoms of COVID-19.

BY JILL LUPINE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY GABRIELA BARRANTES

By the end of 2020, as many as one in three Americans had contracted the COVID-19 virus. Of those who have recovered, most have returned to normal life without incident. Some, however, have not been so fortunate.

Imagine contracting a potentially deadly virus and surviving the acute phase of the illness, only to experience lingering symptoms that significantly diminish your quality of life. This is exactly what's happening to people who struggle with the "long haul" symptoms of COVID-19. The wide-ranging list of symptoms includes tiredness or fatigue, headache, dizziness while standing, joint or muscle pain, heart palpitations, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent cough, and depression or anxiety, among others.

Members of the medical community theorize that these symptoms may stem from the body not getting enough oxygen while fighting the illness, thereby causing a cascade of problems that may vary from one person to the next. While physicians may use traditional interventions to treat these symptoms with varying degrees of success, anyone who suffers from these symptoms might consider a promising alternative: hyperbaric oxygen therapy, also known as HBOT.

New clinical evidence suggests that HBOT may also effectively alleviate long-haul COVID-

19 symptoms. This comes as no surprise to Victoria Bliss-Calkins, the president and CEO of Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center in Langhorne, who says medical-grade HBOT has been used to treat illnesses since the early 1900s. As the technology has evolved, HBOT has been prescribed for an ever-growing list of health issues, from concussion and stroke to Lyme disease and Parkinson's disease to autism and posttraumatic stress disorder.

"Some patients we are currently treating have dramatically reduced or even eliminated their long-haul COVID symptoms in as few as five to 10 treatments," Bliss-Calkins says, "although our medical director, Dr. Benjamin Lam, recommends a minimum of 10 to 20 treatments."

With each 90-minute HBOT session, a patient is immersed in 100 percent oxygen within a pressurized hyperbaric chamber. During these sessions—called "dives" because the pressure simulates the experience of being 17 to 33 feet underwater—the environment increases oxygen concentration in the body at 15 to 20 times greater than normal at the cellular level. This, in turn, promotes the

growth of new blood vessels and reduces inflammation throughout the body and accelerating the body's ability to heal.

All treatments are overseen by medical director Benjamin Lam, D.O., FACOS, FACS. Dr. Lam has over 20 years of experience in advanced wound care, as well as certification in hyperbaric medicine. He leads a team of physicians that includes Patrick Fall, D.O.; Jeremy Jaffe, M.D.; Philip Sasso, M.D.; and Sanjay Shah, M.D., each of whom brings years of medical experience to the enterprise.

When a patient comes to Oxygen Oasis for treatment, they meet with Dr. Lam or another hyperbaric physician and undergo a thorough screening. If the physician determines that HBOT has the potential to improve the patient's condition, he will then provide a prescription for treatment that includes the number of sessions and at what pressure.

Oxygen Oasis offers HBOT in two chamber options: monoplace, designed for single patients or a parent and a child; and multiplace, which is a larger chamber that can be used to treat multiple patients comfortably in a single session. Jason Friel, safety director at Oxygen Oasis, says certified hyperbaric technicians supervise each session to protect each patient's safety throughout treatment. He adds that Oxygen Oasis is accredited by The Joint Commission, meaning the facility has undergone thorough vetting by a respected independent body and been determined to meet or exceed high standards in regard to quality of care.



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Whether a patient comes to Oxygen Oasis for relief from long-haul COVID-19 symptoms or other conditions that affect his or her quality of life, Bliss-Calkins and her team provide a safety-focused environment designed to promote a patient's wellness, positivity, and peace of mind.

"Our primary focus is on improving the quality of life for patients and their families," she says. "It's our passion, and it's why I created this center in the first place." ■

→ **Oxygen Oasis Hyperbaric Wellness Center**

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