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A Diver's Dilemma: A Case Report on Caisson's Disease

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Caissons Disease or Decompression Sickness is a condition that results from dissolved gases coming out of solution (blood) into bubbles inside the body brought about by rapid change in external pressure from high to low. It is an acute neurological emergency in Divers. There are currently no diagnostic criteria and studies of therapies lack an acceptable case definition for this disease.

We report a case of a 30 year old male, Asian, leisure diver, who presented with severe headache and vomiting after rapid ascent from a 29 meter dive. MRI of the brain, MRA of the intracranial vessels and subsequent MRV was done showed venous thrombosis, attenuated flow on the superior and inferior Sagittal sinus and absent blood flow straight, right transverse, right sigmoid sinuses and right jugular. The patient was diagnosed with Patient was treated with Heparin Drip and Hyperbaric Therapy.

Headaches were improved but still recurring after hyperbaric therapy and patient was eventually transferred to an institution with a hyperbaric chamber for continuance of treatment. Although most cases results in 100 % recovery after hyperbaric therapy, 3 month follow ups showed persistent symptoms as much as 14.3% and 16% having permanent neurological sequale.

Keywords: Decompression Sickness; Caissons Disease; Divers Disease; Headache; Venous Thrombosis; Hyperbaric oxygen therapy