

One doctor believes an oxygen pressure chamber helps spinal patients, writes **Daniel Hoy**

WHEN most people think of hyperbaric chambers, they think of footballers trying to get fit for the finals.

Melbourne doctor Mal Hooper has gone a step further, pioneering the application and role of hyperbaric oxygenation in the treatment of chronic spinal injury — disc prolapse, failed back surgery and spinal-cord injuries.

Hypermed Australia offers the only private hyperbaric treatment area in Melbourne.

“Infections thrive in low oxygen sites. Spinal conditions, neurovascular disorders, strokes, cancers, slow wound healing are all greatly helped by the introduction of oxygen saturation to the cells,” Hooper says.

Hooper does not guarantee any miracle cures, but says his treatments continue to demonstrate dramatic improvements in immune responses, ranging from simple but difficult-to-treat conditions such as slow wound healing to major disabilities. He says that in some cases, the treatment can make some difference to spinal patients, depending on the injury.

“Many spinal patients improve and gain functional returns, not because they continue to sit in a wheelchair but because the body is finding a way to decrease the inflammation within the damaged section of the spinal cord, reactivating nerve cells that are not dead but simply non-functional,” he says.

Visit www.spinalrehab.com.au or ph: 9650 3136 or email info@hypermed.com.au



HOW IT WORKS

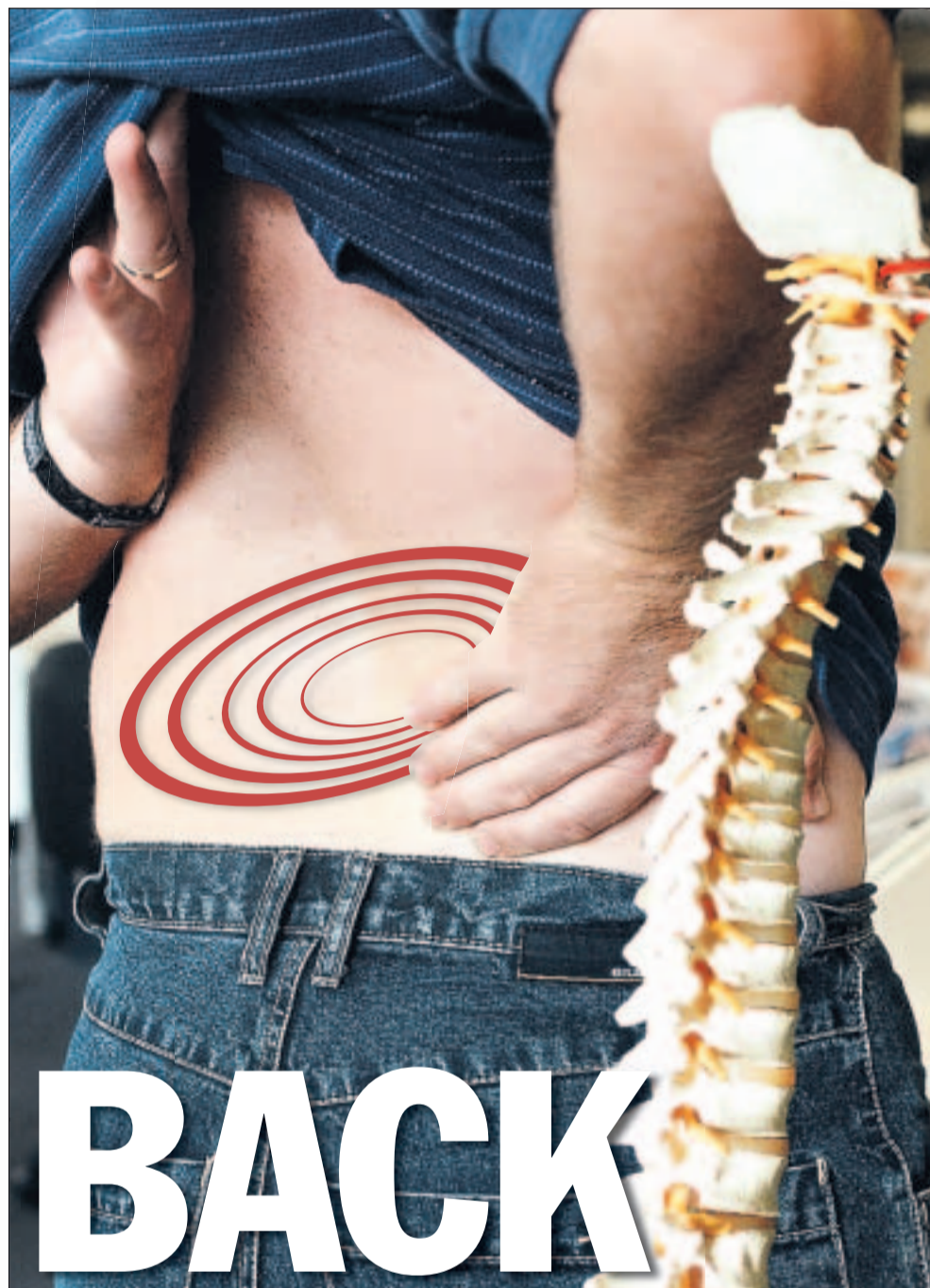
Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) is a method of safely delivering high doses of oxygen to the body, by breathing 100 per cent oxygen through a mask or hood while inside a pressurised air chamber.

The pressure inside the chamber causes the oxygen breathed to be dissolved at greater than normal levels in the blood. This provides an additional 15-20 fold (2000 per cent) increase in tissue oxygenation, significantly accelerating the rate of healing, stabilisation and repair.

Hyperbaric oxygenation and its application are global

In the US and many other countries, HBOT is commonly used to treat sports-related injuries. It can also have clinical benefits by:

- **INCREASING** the saturative effects of dissolved oxygen into compromised tissues;
- **DECREASING** swelling, edema and painful inflammation, while promoting the growth of new capillary blood vessels (neovascularisation);
- **DEACTIVATING** and clearing toxins (lactic acid);
- **INCREASING** the body's ability to fight infections; and
- **PROMOTING** neurovascular salvage.



BACK TRACK

GOOD VIBRATIONS

Hypermed does not offer only hyperbaric chamber treatment. It also uses a technique called Advanced Vibration Training.

The machine allows an athlete recovering from injury to work out while experiencing varying degrees of vibration through their muscles.

It is being used by most major sports in the US, including the NFL and NBA, has been used by Tour de France great Lance Armstrong, and AFL club Collingwood uses a vibration machine as part of pre-match and post-game conditioning.

Dr Mal Hooper says vibration therapy's uses in relation to rehabilitation include:

HELPING to better use what the patient has left. In a stroke patient, for example, it improves neuromuscular co-ordination, balance, gait (walking) and circulation, and decreases chronic pain and swelling. It is also time and cost-effective.

A PATIENT with severe disability can have access to a home unit, meaning several times a day the application of vibration can be directed without having to go through the difficulty of attending a special gym that requires supervision and additional expense.

THE FUTURE

Hooper says that in some cases, stem cells can help spinal victims to walk again.

“Stem cells for spinal-cord injury are available throughout the world,” he says.

“Depending on the level of injury and the degree of compromise, if there remains some viable tissue, then stem cells combined with appropriate medical management including Hyperbaric Oxygenation and neuro-robotic rehabilitation, walking is possible.”

House call BROKEN COLLARBONE



A common injury among cyclists and footballers, such as St Kilda's Nick Riewoldt (above), the collarbone more often than not takes the brunt of a fall. The symptoms of a broken collarbone include pain, swelling, trouble moving your shoulder and weakness. It is best to visit your doctor after any violent fall, but if the pain does not start to subside, get to the doctor as soon as possible. The good news is that a broken collarbone usually heals without complications.

Number cruncher 1496

The number of kilojoules in a Mango Magic from Boost Juice.

The BIG EVENT

The BP Ultimate/BRW Corporate Triathlon is on Sunday and you can be assured of one thing: it will attract a huge field. The venue at Elwood has a carnival atmosphere with more than 80 corporate marquees and thousands of competitors. www.supersprint.com.au

See it WIRED TO WIN



The new Imax documentary explores cutting-edge brain science through the dramatic story of the 2003 Tour de France. The film concentrates on the human brain's amazing ability to overcome adversity, and accomplish the near impossible. The film features Melbourne cyclist Baden Cooke (above) as he battles to win the Green Jersey, awarded to the tour's best sprinter.

HEALTH&FITNESS

Editor> Daniel Hoy
Phone> 9292 1801 Fax> 9292 1177
Email> hoyd@heraldsun.com.au
Advertising>
Huey Nguyen Phone> 9292 2689