

SAQ 5

You are working in a tertiary referral centre that houses the local hyperbaric chamber. You are contacted by a GP working in a remote GP staffed medical centre located 150 km away. They have a 30 year old male diver with suspected decompression illness.

The GP is requesting advice and your retrieval of this patient.

Current observations:

GCS 14 (V4)

HR 60 /min

BP 95/50 mmHg

Temperature 34.0 °C

O₂ Sats 92 % 8L/min O₂ via Hudson mask

RR 28 /min

a) Outline your instructions for patient management prior to retrieval team arrival (3 Marks)

1 Mark for any three of:

Manage patient supine or left lateral position / prevent movement

100% Oxygen

Volume resuscitate / optimise blood pressure

Correct hypothermia

No marks for Trendelenburg position as increases risk of cerebral gas embolisation

b) Describe the important steps in the retrieval of this patient (7 Marks)

1 Mark up to 7 marks for each of major headings:

Issues - need to avoid altitude / maintain temp / maintain oxygenation / support circulation

Early liaison with hyperbaric physician and communication with GP

Staffing

Retrieval team e.g. RFDS or send from hospital - stem suggests hospital

based retrieval team - ensure adequate Dept staffing if sending from

Emergency Department

Modality - no right answer - need to recognise issue of speed of retrieval and need to avoid altitude

Road may be suitable time to aircraft take-off / landing likely comparable

Road cheaper more available

Aircraft - if used must mention pressurisation / avoid altitude

Equipment

Oxygen 100% for journey - adequate supply

Potential for need for RSI / airway equipment

Rewarming - cabin temperature / blankets / warmed fluids

Inotropes / central access

Patient

Stabilise and assess on arrival

Consider ETT / resp support

IDC

Transport to destination

Liaise with hyperbaric chamber or HDU

Documentation / NOK

Ensure adequate documentation of transfer

Adequate handover

Ensure patient / family / NOK aware of plan / transfer

Question / answer model taken from ACEM Fellowship Exam 2013.1 SAQ Question 8

Additional information from Cameron, Textbook of Adult Emergency Medicine, 4th Edition, Chp 28.3