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**DIVERS' EARS**

Whitsunday Diving Medical Centre  
P.O. Box 207, Airlie Beach  
Queensland 4802  
10 July 1992

Dear Editor,

On a recent two day diving trip on the Great Barrier Reef with 20 recreational divers, (19 of whom had medical or nursing qualifications), every diver had their ears examined before diving commenced and after all diving had ceased.

The group consisted of 9 males and 11 females with varied diving experience.

| Number of dives | Number of divers | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| 1 - 10          | 9                | (45%)      |
| 11 - 50         | 8                | (40%)      |
| 50 plus         | 3                | (15%)      |
|                 | 20               |            |

Diving the weekend the divers had an average 5.3 dives (range 2-7).

Of the 20 divers 5 (25%) had symptoms of aural barotrauma of descent. Only one had to stop diving prematurely. At the end of all diving 10 (50%) divers were seen, on direct inspection of the tympanic membrane, to have aural barotrauma involving 16 ears.

| Grade        | Ears affected | Symptomatic ears |
|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1            | 11            | 2                |
| 2            | 1             | 1                |
| 3            | 4             | 2                |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>16</b>     | <b>5</b>         |

The 10 divers with aural barotrauma came from all the experience groups in approximately the same ratios in the group.

| Number of dives | Divers affected | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1 - 10          | 5               | (50%)      |
| 11 - 50         | 4               | (40%)      |
| 50 plus         | 1               | (10%)      |

It was interesting to note that over the weekend 5 divers were taking Sudafed tablets for symptoms of mild upper respiratory tract congestion. Of these 5 divers, 3 suffered aural barotrauma, 2 with symptoms, but no one had to stop diving prematurely.

Also interesting was that 7 divers used transdermal hyoscine (SCOP) patches as prophylaxis for sickness despite a favourable weather forecast.

- 1 Although anecdotal this weekend demonstrated that Aural barotrauma is very common in recreational diving despite diving experience (and medical knowledge).
- 2 Subclinical aural barotrauma is also very common.
- 3 Grade 1 aural barotrauma can be symptomatic and grade 3 can be asymptomatic.
- 4 Decongestants (especially pseudoephedrine preparations) and transdermal hyoscine are commonly used by divers.

John Parker

**HIGH TECH DIVING**

**A response to the editorial in the Jan-Mar 1992 SPUMS Journal.**

Hamilton Research Ltd  
80 Grove Street, Tarrytown  
New York, 10591-4138  
5 August 1992

Dear Editor,

The essay on "high tech" diving by Des Gorman in the 1992 Jan-Mar issue of *SPUMS Journal* stands firmly as the opinion of one of the most knowledgeable and respected members of the international diving community and would not normally require a response. However, the essay mentions my involvement, and lest by default I be assigned the role of the villain in the piece, I feel a response is necessary. That involvement, by the way, has not been very great in Australia, but I seem to have found myself in the middle of several issues in the US related to technical and special mix diving, some of which deserve discussion.