

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NON-DIVING NEUROLOGICAL PROBLEM IN A DIVER

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Dear Editor

The reprinted case report on carotid artery occlusion following a dive¹ reminded me of another interesting neurological case in a diver. A professional diver in his early 40s, whom I had been seeing for his annual medical for some years, came for his 2001 medical with a fascinating story. While working offshore he had developed transient ischaemic attacks (TIAs) which were not related to his dives. After several episodes of mild hemiparesis he was investigated by a mystified medical team before his relevant past history became apparent. Some years before he had been in the armed forces and did a spell of active duty in Northern Ireland when he had been shot in the neck. The bullet was removed and he made an uneventful recovery but seemingly the carotid artery had been permanently scarred allowing a plaque to form over the years which began to generate emboli. Carotid ligation stopped his symptoms and he has successfully returned to diving and had no further symptoms.

Peter Glanvill

Reference

- 1 Hughes PJ. Internal carotid artery occlusion following sports diving. *SPUMS J* 2001; 31 (4): 238-240

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JACQUES MAYOL

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Dear Editor

I thought it would be appropriate to draw members' attention to Jacques Mayol's obituary which appeared in the Daily Telegraph on January 10, 2002 here in the UK and from which much of the following is extracted.

Jacques Mayol was born in Shanghai in 1927 to French parents and spent the first 13 years of his life in Asia. He first became interested in diving on family holidays in Japan and was undeterred when his father died in a diving accident. As a young man he won several European contests among free divers who would cling to weighted, falling sleds and were judged purely on how deep they were able to fall. The contests were suspended after a number of participants died.

With his Italian rival Enzo Maiorca, Jacques Mayol continued to extend the boundaries of free diving, descending to 60 m off the coast of Miami in 1966, then 100 m 10 years later, the first diver to plunge so deep. He gave up diving in 1983 after he had set the world record for free diving, aged 56, by descending to 105 m, a feat of endurance which was not beaten for 13 years.

In 1984, the film director Luc Besson approached Jacques Mayol about making a film centred on his rivalry with fellow free diver Enzo Maiorca. The film, *The Big Blue* (1988) starred Jean-Marc Barr as Mayol.

His own publications include *L'Homo Delphinus – The Dolphin Within Man* (1983) and a novel, *Les dix rois de la mer* (1989). His recently published *Heritage des Peuples de la mer* describes his dives among the undersea ruins of the Yonaguni island.

Jacques Mayol died on the island of Elba aged 74.

I first became aware of Jacques Mayol's achievements in 1974 when I was working for an international deep diving company based in Italy.

It was also with this same company that in 1976 I was the Medical Officer for the Eastern Hemisphere's first commercial 300 m dive from a semi-submersible drilling rig off the west coast of Mainland Shetland. The magical imperial equivalent for this dive being, of course, 1,000 ft.

I instructed the diver and the bellman in some basic clinical observation techniques which I would be asking them to carry out just before commencing the dive.

"Oh, you don't have to worry about me," protested the diver, "I was one of Jacques Mayol's disciples".

He then proceeded to tell me about the yoga and meditation techniques which he had been taught by the maestro which included psychogenic negative feedback to the cardiovascular system causing a slowing of the heart rate and "negative pressure breathing" which resulted in fluid transfer, venous in particular, into the thoracic cavity.