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To assess the techniques used by patients who have undergone laryngectomies to enable them to participate in aquatic activities.

STUDY DESIGN: Unstructured interviews.

METHODS: The case histories of 4 patients who have returned to swimming and other aquatic activities after total laryngectomy were obtained by nonstructured interviews emphasizing techniques used to swim, safety precautions taken, any accidents or near accidents, and perceived effect of aquatic activities on sense of well being and quality of life.

RESULTS: All 4 of the interviewed subjects swim regularly using commercial breathing aids or manual tracheostomal occlusion. One of the four is a regular surfer, who uses a homemade breathing aid. All were active swimmers prior to the development of laryngeal cancer. A single aquatic-related accident was reported by 1 of the 4 swimmers. All subjects describe feeling an enhanced quality of life resulting from their participation in aquatic activities.

CONCLUSION: Despite recommendations of most clinicians, a small number of highly motivated patients will return to aquatic activities after laryngectomy.


The ascending peripheral neuropathy and paralysis that result from Guillain-Barre Syndrome's (GBS) demyelination of peripheral nerves is a challenge to health professionals; the patient requires support during the acute disease process and during the remyelination recovery period, often lasting months to years.

The staff of a major metropolitan teaching hospital's critical care unit (CCU) and physiotherapy departments developed a hydrotherapy treatment programme for a ventilated patient with GBS.

Through careful planning and appropriate preparation, it was found that hydrotherapy could successfully and safely be incorporated into a patient's treatment regimen.

The benefits included improved range of movement due to the supportive nature of water, anecdotal increased strength, size and movement of remyelinating muscles and a psychological improvement.

Although this patient has not recovered from GBS to be independent, hydrotherapy was a valuable part of the treatment regimen and it could be suggested the increase muscle strength lead to improved respiratory function and enabled weaning from ventilation, reducing intensive care length of stay and cost.