

WE CAN ALL LEARN FROM THIS

During August 2007 a new diver was taking instruction in Lake Taupo.

His dive profile was dive 1= 4m/45min.surface interval 20min,dive2=4m/45min surface interval, 20min. With the 3rd and last dive being 18m/30min. It was noted in the report that rapid ascent could also be a contributing factor in this incident.

The diver started to get headaches on the drive home to Napier and then suffered pain in neck and shoulder regions.

Realising that he was suffering from decompression sickness he went to the local hospital that organised a helicopter to fly at low level to the navy recompression chamber for treatment.

Once again we have a victim who is to be commended, firstly for recognising he had a diving problem and seeking treatment promptly, and secondly sharing his experience with all of us to enhance our diving knowledge,

So what went wrong with 3 very ordinary dives, and what could be contributing factors to cause the onset of DCS?

This incident occurred in August in a lake. We can safely assume cold water and an immersion for a total 120 minutes. He was wearing a wet suit, as opposed to a dry suit and he would have an impeded blood flow due to the cold.

Diving in Lake Taupo is at an altitude of around 300m so there is less ambient pressure on us as soon as we exit the water, differing from completing a dive at sea level.

I am only guessing this, but if the diver was warmed rapidly, by for example by a shower or a car heater turned up high,this could also contribute to the problem.

The trip back home to Hawkes Bay travelling over hills up to 800m above sea level lowered the ambient pressure even further, which almost certainly tipped the scales with the resulting DCS

Completing the deepest dive last is also something we are told is not advisable. There are however varied schools of thought on this subject. For myself my attitude is, why take the risk when there is no need to.

As we see in all dive incidents there are almost always many contributing factors, some human, and others brought about by us entering an environment which can be unforgiving if we take it for granted, or don't factor in our physiological limitations.

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