ENT problems suffered by scuba divers during participation in diving activities

Background:

What types of Acute ENT problems while diving make a diver visit a healthcare facility? We studied incidence of such problems in the DAN member community as probably the biggest diving community diving medical information can be collected from.

Methods:

Population studied: DAN Europe active members from 2009 to 2011.

Inclusion criteria: filed insurance claim for diving related ENT problem, defined as any acute medical condition affecting EAR, NOSE, SINUSES &PHARYNX or related functions. ENT problems might be caused by diving or unexpected illness unrelated to diving. Claims were classified into 1-Barotrauma; 2-inner ear DCI (IEDCI); 3-non diving related illness, according to medical reports submitted by treating facilities.

Areas Studied: Anthropometric and demographic data, country & time of accident, certification level, area affected, percentage of diving ENT problems vs. total diving problems, previous history.

Results: *Cumulative incidence* of diving ENT problems per 10000 members was 21.53 in 2009, 27.60 in 2010, 26.83 in 2011. Diving ENT problems constituted 22.22%, 27.55%, 26.50% of total diving related claims filed in 2009, 2010, 2011 respectively and they increased by 36.53% from 2009 to 2010 and by 20.19% from 2010 to 2011. Barotraumas constituted 71.04% of all ENT problems and 18.19% of all the diving medical problems in the observed period.

Conclusion: Although ENT problems are by far the more frequent medical complaint in recreational diving, and cause significant morbidity, they are too often neglected. More intensive research and educational programs to decrease their incidence and morbidity are advocated. A universal reporting form for diving ENT problems to help research progress in this area is proposed. Furthermore DAN has produced the specific EAR & DIVING educational program to help improve divers safety and awareness.

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