What is hyperbaric oxygen therapy?
Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) has been used since the 1930s to treat decompression sickness. It is also used to treat a variety of acute and chronic medical conditions. It consists of a special chamber, sometimes called a pressure chamber, which allows the patient to obtain high levels of oxygen in the blood. The air inside the pressurized chamber is typically 2.5 times greater than normal atmospheric pressure, equivalent to being 45 feet underwater. The blood can then carry larger amounts of oxygen and bring this oxygen to organs and tissues. With more oxygen, infected wounds can heal more quickly.

The concentration of oxygen at this level facilitates the growth of blood vessels and tissues by increasing circulation. Inundating the body with oxygen also helps counteract toxins, such as in cases of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Who does the procedure benefit?
The UK Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Service uses HBOT for treating the patients with:

- Air or gas embolism
- Carbon monoxide/cyanide poisoning
- Gas gangrene
- Decompression sickness
- Chronic, nonhealing wounds
- Exceptional blood loss
- Intracranial abscess
- Bone and soft tissue radiation injury
- Compromised skin grafts and flaps
- Soft tissue infections

What is the procedure like?
Patients lie down in the enclosed chamber and breathe 100 percent oxygen for about 80 minutes. Patients suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning breathe the oxygen for 90 minutes. The procedure is not painful, but some patients report feeling pressure in their ears similar to the sensation felt while in an airplane. Other patients report the sensation feels like scuba diving in 100 percent oxygen.

How many treatments are required?
 Normally, 30 treatments are necessary for each patient. Patients being treated for carbon monoxide poisoning only require one or two treatments. Treatments are performed Monday through Friday for six weeks.

After the 30 treatments, patients may not notice a drastic improvement in their health; however the healing process continues nearly two weeks after the last treatment and the patient’s condition continues to improve.

Seeking treatment with the UK Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Service
The UK Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Service treats 25 to 30 patients a year and performs about 700 procedures annually. Patients are referred by their primary doctor in nonemergency situations. The majority of patients have undergone radiation therapy. A consultation is scheduled to determine if the patient is a candidate for HBOT. Successful treatment requires collaboration among health care providers, as HBOT does not replace any other required treatment.

For more information about UK Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Service, call (859) 323-5908.
UK HealthCare is UK Hospital, Kentucky Children’s Hospital, Kentucky Clinics, Markey Cancer Center, Gill Heart Institute, Kentucky Neuroscience & Orthopaedics Institute, and the clinical activities of the UK Colleges of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Health Sciences, Public Health and Nursing.