

242 Myers Street
Geelong, Victoria
23/8/96

Dear Editor

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to reply to Dr Roydhouse's letter.

I must confess that I found writing this paper somewhat frustrating. There were many areas which have been poorly written about in the literature. In fact, I had most difficulty in finding references relating to the middle and inner ears and the effects of barotrauma. My review is what I have been able to glean from the available literature.

I agree that Valsalva appears have written two descriptions of his manoeuvre. I found references that Valsalva described the manoeuvre as forced expiration against a closed glottis. I am therefore very interested to hear that he described it as a way of clearing out suppurative middle ear disease. I think that there is probably room for both definitions i.e. one against a closed glottis and another while holding the nose, as divers do.

The "standardised" manoeuvre has an open glottis to allow measurement of pressure yet has the soft palate blocking the transmission of pressure to the nasopharynx and therefore the Eustachian tubes and middle ears. I am confused as to the correct definition of the Valsalva manoeuvre!

It is not possible to really explain to a diver what we mean by "too forcefully" or "too long a period". I could find no help in the literature on this point, apart from a description of the standardised manoeuvre. I think the suggested time limit of 5 seconds is appropriate. If a diver needs to blow harder than he is used to, then he should be aware that perseverance with the manoeuvre may lead to complications.

David Taylor

Key Words

ENT, physiology.

MEDICAL ASSESSMENT OF FITNESS TO DIVE

7 Lyncroft Gardens
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Dear Editor

The Medical Guidance, MA1, used as the basis for fitness assessment of North Sea divers and followed internationally, is about to change. It is now recognised that, apart from police and military divers who are

administered separately, there are 5 distinct categories of working diver in the UK: offshore, inland, scientific, media and the professional instructors of recreational diving. Each group will dive using a separate Approved Code of Practice.

A meeting will be held from the 14th to the 16th of March 1997 in Newcastle upon Tyne to discuss these changes.

Many of the changes to the Medical Standards for Diving for four of these categories arise from the 1994 Edinburgh meeting and it is proposed that the fifth group, the scuba instructors, have a different examination. Some of the proposed changes in the 1997 version of the Medical Guidance may need interpretation or clarification by the HSE at this meeting.

The academic program will begin on the Friday morning, 14th of March, with Ralph Mavin, HSE's Chief Inspector of Diving, outlining the new Diving Regulations and its various Codes of Practice. The apparent differences between the different Codes of Practice will be highlighted. Dr Stephen Doherty of EMAS will then present the medical views of HSE relating to the procedures and responsibilities required from Approved Doctors for record keeping, appeals and other matters. The competent medical interpretation of the Guidance in relation to each diver being examined will depend upon the knowledge and skills of the examining doctor. The new structure will require appropriate training of Approved doctors to a high standard and, to maintain consistency of medical standards, will need them to maintain continuing medical revision.

A review of the major organ systems will be led by some of the key speakers from the Edinburgh meeting and there will be special emphasis on those aspects of the new Guidance in which some important changes are likely to be made, such as accepting some sports diving instructors with insulin-dependent diabetes. The meeting will be held in the Copthorne Hotel, Newcastle upon Tyne, situated beside the river some 10 minutes from the main railway station and linked by a regular metro service to Newcastle's international airport. The meeting will close at lunchtime on Sunday 16th of March, 1997.

This will be a milestone meeting for all Medical Examiners of Divers. PGEA and CME approvals are expected.

Details from Biomedical Seminars, 7 Lyncroft Gardens, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey GU27 2HX, UK. Fax + 44-181-786-7036. E-mail 106101.1722@compuserve.com .

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Key Words

Fitness to dive, medical standards, meeting.