A Study of ventilatory response to CO2 in submarines, diving arm volunteers, divers and surface navy soldiers

Principal worker
Lt Col SP Singh

Unit
AFMC Pune

OBJECTIVES

To study if prolonged intermittent exposure to elevated inspired fractional concentration of carbon dioxide (FICO2) causes blunting of ventilatory response to CO2 in divers and submariners and the associated acid base disturbance due to this phenomenon on exercise.

METHODOLOGY

Twenty each of submariners, diving arm volunteers, divers and surface navy soldiers were study subjects. They were subjected to incremental exercise test and their end-tidal CO2 measured before, after and during exercise. Arterial blood was sampled before and after exercise for presence of post-exercise acidosis and its nature.

RESULTS

Divers and dive volunteers showed a comparable increase in PetCO2 during exercise which was significantly greater than in submarines and navy soldiers. Two divers and one dive volunteer displayed respiratory acidosis after mild to moderate exercise.

CONCLUSION

The CO2 retention during exercise seen in divers may be an inherent trait. It may pose a hazard to the diver in certain situations. CO2 retention during underwater activity may play a role in dive accidents.