

NEAR-FATAL PHYSALIA STINGS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To describe a near-fatal jellyfish envenomation in a diver by the Atlantic *Physalia physalis* and discuss measures to prevent future envenomation.

Clinical features: A healthy 45 year-old diver surfaced under a large *Physalia*, suffering multiple severe stings to the unprotected areas of his face and neck. Attempts to remove the medusa seemed to increase envenomation, but treatment by self-administered oxygen and adoption of the semi-fowler position before becoming unconscious were probably life-saving.

Conclusions: Such incidents can be prevented by using adequate protective diving clothing and by carefully watching for floating jellyfish when ascending from dives, particularly in areas and times when medusae may be present. Adherent tentacles should not be removed until the swimmer is out of the water and stable. Continued efforts should be made to resuscitate envenomated patients in the early hours after the sting.