

Evaluation of hypoxic training protocols

Introduction. Acute exposure to high altitude impairs performance, both aerobic and psychomotor. Consequently preparation of personnel to be deployed to high altitude regions should incorporate a programme of altitude acclimatisation. The aim of the present study was to evaluate the effect of several training programmes on sea level and altitude performance: Live low-Train High (LL-TH), Intermittent Hypoxic Training (IHT), Respiratory Muscle Training (RMT), and Sleep High-Train Low (SH-TL).

Methods. A total of 50 healthy male subjects were assigned to either a control group, or to one of the four training groups. Each group comprised 10 subjects. Subjects conducted daily 1 hr training sessions on a cycle ergometer at a work rate equivalent to 50% of their previously determined peak power output (PPO).

During the one month training programme, they maintained their exercise heart rate at a level corresponding to 50% PPO. Before, during and after the training programme, subjects conducted a VO₂max and Endurance test under hypoxic and normoxic conditions. Endurance was defined as time to exhaustion when exercising on a cycle ergometer at 80% PPO. Complete haemograms were obtained before, during and after the training programmes

Results. Compared to the Control group, the LL-TH, IHT and SH-TL groups exhibited an improvement ($p < 0.05$) in hypoxic VO₂max.

The SH-TL group also demonstrated improvement ($p < 0.05$) in the endurance test. The LL-TH, RMT and the IHT groups showed no improvement.

Normoxic performance (VO₂max, Endurance) improved ($p < 0.05$) only in the SH-TL group, not in the LL-TH, the RMT or in the IHT groups

Improvements in pulmonary function (maximum voluntary ventilation, MVV) were observed in the SH-TL and RMT groups, but not in the LL-TH or IHT groups.

Conclusion. The optimal method for improving sea level and altitude aerobic performance is SH-TL. It initiated the largest improvements in VO₂max and endurance.

Primary Author, Presenting Author: Igor B. Mekjavic Ph.D. Jozef Stefan Institute Department of Automation, Biocybernetics and Robotics Jamova 39 Ljubljana Slovenia SI-1000

Co-authors:

Stylianos N. Kounalakis, Michail E. Keramidas M.Sc, Mojca Amon M.Sc. Tadej Debevec B.Sc. Jozef Stefan Institute Department of Automation, Biocybernetics and Robotics Jamova 39 Ljubljana Slovenia SI-1000

Bostjan Simunic Ph.D. , Rado Pisot Ph.D. University of Primorska Garibaldijeva 1 Koper Slovenia SI-1000

Ola Eiken FOI, Swedish Defence Research Agency Berzeliusvag 13 Karolinska Institute Stockholm, Sweden SE-17177