

Accidents with High Pressure Water Jets

Recommendation
DMAC 03 – January 1981

With increased underwater activity relating to repair and inspection, it is becoming clear that accidents with high pressure water jets will occur. The following comments about the management of such accidents have been made by the Diving Medical Advisory Committee:

- 1 The wound caused may appear insignificant and give little indication of the extent of the injury beneath and the damage to deeper tissue.
- 2 Initial mild damage to the wall of an organ may result in subsequent rupture, particularly if infection has been introduced.
- 3 The development of subsequent infection is particularly important in abdominal and joint injuries.
- 4 The outcome depends upon the extent of initial injury and the presence or absence of infection, and even though the injury seems trivial on the surface and the patient has no complaints, it is of great importance to arrange for surgical examination as quickly as possible.
- 5 Where surgical examination is not immediately possible in a remote situation, first aid measures are confined to dressing the wound and observing the patient closely for the development of further complaints over four to five days. The development of fever and a rising pulse rate suggest that the injury is serious, together with persistence or occurrence of pain.
- 6 Where surgical advice is unobtainable, consideration should be given to providing the patient with a course of antibiotic therapy.