

Hypoxia and the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370

July 1 2014



SFU is offering the public an opportunity to experience the effects of hypoxia and nitrogen narcosis in a controlled environment. Sherri Ferguson is the director of SFU's environmental medicine and physiology unit.

Sherri Ferguson, an SFU researcher who works with Canada's only civilian hypo-hyperbaric chamber, says hypoxia's recent link to the missing Malaysian jet conjures up "thoughts of passengers and crew gasping for air" while in reality they would have "peacefully just gone to

sleep" in a matter of minutes. Given the altitude and cabin depressurization they would have had about one minute of "useful consciousness," she says. "The lack of oxygen saturation in the blood stream would then lead to a variety of symptoms including poor coordination, reduced vision, inability to see colors, fatigue, headache, dizziness, sweating and euphoria and eventually unconsciousness and death."

Ferguson directs SFU's Environmental Medicine & Physiology Unit, which researchers use to carry out studies on the effects of [hypoxia](#) and nitrogen narcosis on pilots and divers. She was recently granted research trainee awards from Worksafe BC and the US Office of Naval Research to carry out further scientific investigations into the effect of high pressure on cognition and heart function in divers. SFU recently partnered with hyperbaric safety specialist, International ATMO, of San Antonio TX to offer the first Hyperbaric Safety Director course in compliance with Canadian standards.

Dr. Peter Ruben, associate dean of Research and Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Science, says SFU trains many civilian and military pilots and divers to recognize and experience the symptoms of hypoxia and narcosis in a clinical setting so that "negative outcomes can hopefully be avoided." SFU's hypo/hyperbaric chamber is also used to research low- and high-pressure treatments for traumatic brain injuries, autism and diabetic neuropathy and wound treatment and is currently the only place in Canada offering training.



Hypo/Hyperbaric Chamber



Hypo/Hyperbaric Chamber

Provided by Simon Fraser University

Citation: Hypoxia and the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 (2014, July 1) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-07-hypoxia-malaysian-airlines-flight-mh370.html>

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