



## High Altitude Cerebral Edema

Alaska, Denali, West Buttress

**On June 14, a 51-year-old male climber and his two climbing partners left late in the afternoon for a summit attempt from 17,200-foot camp. When one of the climbers began to exhibit signs of severe altitude sickness, the group decided to separate, with one of the climbers continuing up and the other accompanying the ill climber back toward high camp.** During the descent, the stricken climber became nauseated and began to have difficulty walking. Another climbing team helped guide the patient back to high camp at 17,200 feet. This climbing team was in regular contact with the NPS rangers at 14,200-foot camp and selflessly took care of the patient in their own tent for the next 18 hours. Once weather allowed NPS rescuers to ascend to high camp, they evaluated the patient, confirmed a diagnosis of high altitude cerebral edema (HACE), and called for a helicopter evacuation.

### ANALYSIS

This case highlights the benefits of immediate descent for patients exhibiting signs and symptoms of HAPE or HACE. A decrease in altitude often outweighs other medical treatments that can be provided for patients at a higher altitude. This party separated, leaving an ill climber with fewer resources and assistance to make it down to high camp. Fortunately, the two other climbers were willing to abandon their own summit attempt and come to this climber's aid. (Source: Denali Mountaineering Rangers.)

**2019 MISLOW-SWANSON DENALI PRO AWARD:** The Denali mountaineering rangers selected Ibrahim Cetindemir and Thomas Karst as recipients of the 2019 Mislów-Swanson Denali Pro Award for coming to the aid of a climber stricken with high altitude cerebral edema above Denali Pass. From the award citation: "Embodying the true spirit of this annual award, Cetindemir and Karst abandoned their summit attempt in order to rescue a fellow climber in distress. This honor was created in 1998 to recognize extraordinary actions such as theirs.... Without a doubt, their selfless actions saved the life of a fellow climber."

## Images

## Article Details

Author	Denali Mountaineering Rangers
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	73
Page	24
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Accident reports