

Analysis

The National Park Service recommends a time line for ascending the West Buttress that provides most climbers adequate acclimatization. This formula prescribes 10-13 days up to the high camp at 17,200 feet. Kobashi's team moved to high camp on their twelfth day on the mountain, so were well within the average recommended time for the ascent.

Altitude illness can affect anyone, even when they have acclimated properly. Kobayashi had not reported any altitude sickness symptoms prior to their attempt on the summit. This is another case of the unpredictability of altitude related illnesses. This team had the strength and experience to assist their stricken partner and get him back to high camp safely, where they assisted NPS rangers with Kobayashi's evacuation. It is often the case, even with younger climbers, that symptoms do not resolve significantly until the patient returns to low altitude. (Source: Edited from a report by Joe Reichert, Ranger)

HACE

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

On June 29 Stefan Jeronin (40), a client of Mountain Trip, collapsed below Denali Pass about 18,000 feet. He was treated on the hill for HACE symptoms and short-rope down to the 17,200-foot camp on the West Buttress, where he was further evaluated by NPS Rangers. It was determined that Jeronin could descend under his own power with short-rope assistance. Jeronin was advised to descend immediately and to be evaluated again by NPS Rangers at the 14,200-foot camp. Showing no additional signs or symptoms, Jeronin descended under his own power with his guide to the 7,200-foot basecamp, where he was flown out by fixed wing to Talkeetna.

Analysis

Summit day on Mount McKinley is a difficult day, both physically and mentally, for everyone, and the extra performance one demands from the body and mind above 17,000 feet are extreme. Jeronin was physically and mentally tired and his body responded accordingly. At 17,800 feet, his condition was treated as altitude illness, and he was escorted to lower altitudes. His diagnosis was inconclusive, but the treatment remains the same at high elevation. Descend, descend, descend. (Source: Edited from a report by Tucker Chenoweth)

(Editor's Note: While not counted as an accident, this case is presented for its valuable lesson.)

SEIZURES—FAILURE TO INFORM GUIDES OF MEDICAL CONDITION

Alaska, Denali National Park, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

A Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. guided party led by Dave Hahn flew to