

The importance of **ACCREDITATION** for endovenous ablation procedures

By Daniel R Gorin, MD, RVT, FACS

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts recently announced that, after September 1, 2015, they will only reimburse for endovenous ablation procedures done in an Accredited Vein Center. Over the past 15 years there has been a remarkable evolution in the treatment of varicose veins and venous disease. Patients once requiring operations, done under general anesthesia in the hospital, with long recovery times are now being treated with minimally invasive procedures, done in their doctor's office in just a few minutes, and get back to full activities in a day or so. Endovenous ablation is one of these new, very commonly performed, office-based procedures that is a mainstay in the treatment of varicose veins and venous insufficiency. This has allowed patients with painful and unsightly varicose veins to be easily and effectively treated, without a major disruption to their lives.

The transformation of venous care to an office based setting has created significant credentialing problems, howev-

er. All that is required for a physician to do office-based vein procedures is that he or she be licensed to practice medicine in their state. Around the country, physicians with no previous experience or training in venous disease are performing vein procedures. This is also an issue in many areas of Massachusetts, although not in the Cape Cod medical community.

BCBS of Massachusetts is the first insurer in the country to make accreditation a requirement for reimbursement, but the expectation is that this will become a standard of care and other insurers will follow. At the time of the announcement, there were no accredited centers in Massachusetts, and only one in New England.

In response to the credentialing issue, the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC), with the support of all of the major vascular and phlebology societies, developed an accreditation process for vein centers.

The expectation is that the commission

will assess every aspect of operations and its impact on the quality of health care provided to patients. There are rigorous standards for vein procedures, facilities and personnel. In particular, there are standards in place to make sure the procedure recommended for treatment is appropriate. In addition, it requires an extensive quality improvement program to be developed and implemented within the practice so that patient care is continually evaluated and improved.

The process of becoming and maintaining accreditation is fairly onerous and expensive, and many practices are simply not set up and equipped to meet the requirements for accreditation, and will find it very difficult to gain approval under the current IAC standards. However, accreditation provides real and tangible benefit to patients in our medical community. Southeastern Vein Specialists in Hyannis has met all of the standards and is the only fully accredited vein center on Cape Cod.



Treating venous disease often involves multiple, albeit minor, procedures and visits. Patients are commonly busy with work and family, making traveling for their care difficult and often logistically impossible. Fortunately, here on Cape Cod, we can provide high quality, vein care to our patients so they will not have to travel vast distances.

If you have leg swelling, varicose veins, or spider veins, be sure to check to see if the office you consult with for care has been successful in their application for Vein Accreditation. For an accredited center near you, you can check online at intersocietal.org/vein. 



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