New treatments for

VARICOSE VEINS

By Daniel R Gorin, MD, RVT, FACS

Over the past 15 years there has been a remarkable evolution in the treatment of varicose veins and venous disease. Patients once required operations with long recovery times, done in a hospital under general anesthesia. They are now being treated with minimally invasive procedures, done in their doctor’s office in just a few minutes, and are getting back to full activities in a day or so. The development of these new techniques has allowed patients who have been living with their painful and unsightly varicose veins to be easily and effectively treated, without a major disruption in their lives.

The most common procedure done to treat varicose veins is called endovenous ablation. Under ultrasound guidance, a catheter is placed into the vein to be treated. The vein is then heated up and obliterated. The two procedures most commonly performed use electric energy (radiofrequency ablation, or the Venefit procedure) or light energy (laser ablation) to heat the vein. For patient comfort, and to protect the surrounding tissues from heat injury, a local anesthetic, called tumescent anesthesia, is injected around the vein under ultrasound guidance.

Newer techniques are becoming available to vascular specialists, which may prove to be even simpler, quicker, and more comfortable than the current minimally invasive vein procedures. These procedures ablate the vein without using heat. This allows the procedures to be done without the need for tumescent anesthesia, but just with a tiny amount of local anesthesia to numb the area where the vein is accessed.

Mechanical Chemical Ablation (The Clarivein Procedure)

The Clarivein procedure uses a tiny catheter, which is placed into the vein under ultrasound guidance. The tip of the catheter is a small angled wire. When the catheter is activated, the wire spins and abrades the inner lining of the vein. At the same time, a chemical sclerosant is injected through the end of the catheter. Together, these two actions cause occlusion of the vein. Local anesthesia is required at the site where the catheter is inserted into the vein. Otherwise, the patient feels a faint vibration, but nothing else. Two year follow up in the initial study shows a 96 percent occlusion rate in the treated veins.

Polidocanol Foam (Varithena)

Polidocanol is a commonly used medication for sclerotherapy. When it is injected into a vein, the lining of the vein is injured, resulting in the vein fibrosing shut. This is used to treat small varicose veins. Varithena is a foam, made of polidocanol, oxygen and carbon dioxide. It is injected into larger veins under ultrasound guidance. The treatment is painless, requiring only local anesthesia at the insertion site. Foam sclerotherapy is a popular treatment for venous disease in Europe, and the FDA in the United States has recently approved. Initial studies have shown about an 80 percent success rate in ablating the targeted vein.
THE ONLY TIME
YOU’LL EVER NEED A CANDLE
IS FOR ROMANCE.

Cyanoacrylate Glue (VenaSeal)

VenaSeal uses a medical adhesive, cyanoacrylate glue, to ablate the vein. A special catheter allows injection of the glue into the vein under ultrasound guidance. The glue does not become active until it is injected into the vein. Small amounts of the glue (about 2 cc's) are required to ablate the vein. Again, local anesthesia is required only at the insertion site. Initial studies show occlusion rates of 94 percent at one year.

While all of these procedures show promise, there is limited data on how effective they are long term, particularly when compared to the current, heat based ablation techniques. In addition while these procedures are FDA approved and available, they are often not yet covered by insurance providers.

Wonderful treatments for varicose veins are currently available, and more are coming every day. If you suffer from varicose veins and venous disease, see a vascular specialist to learn what treatment is best for you.

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Wellfleet Blossoms Art Exhibition

What do painters and potters have in common with bakers and gourmet chocolatiers? They all immerse their creative energy into making something artistic and wonderful for the world to enjoy. The fourth annual Wellfleet Blossoms Art Exhibition at Preservation Hall in Wellfleet has expanded this year to include the confections and creations of some very exciting culinary artists from Wellfleet. Feast your eyes on the creations of over 50 visual artists in painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, jewelry, and photography, and also taste and enjoy the creations of local culinary artists, including Lola’s Queen of Tarts, Chequesset Chocolate, and Bagodin.

The exhibition will be held at Wellfleet Preservation Hall, April 18-May 2, with the gala reception on Sunday, April 19, 1-4 p.m.