

Through the keyhole

Mr Sudip Ray, a Consultant Vascular Surgeon in London and the Channel Islands, discusses the assessment and treatment of common circulatory disorders

It is nearly 400 years since William Harvey, a physician from Kent, showed that blood was circulating in a one-way direction around the body, leaving the heart in the arteries and returning in the veins. This contradicted a previous theory that blood ebbed and flowed like a tide, and marked the beginning of a greater understanding of circulatory or "vascular" diseases which include blocked arteries (atherosclerosis), deep vein thrombosis and varicose veins.

RAPID RECOVERY

Over the past 10 years the treatment of vascular diseases has been transformed from one often requiring major, invasive surgery towards keyhole techniques which allow a rapid return to normal activity. For example, patients with leg pain due to narrowed arteries can often have widening of the artery using balloon inflation (angioplasty) under local anaesthetic. Abnormally large abdominal arteries (aneurysms) which are at risk of bursting are now routinely repaired by relining the vessel with a man-made stent placed through a small skin incision. Deep vein thrombosis can be cleared within hours using targeted and powerful clotbuster infusions, whilst varicose veins can be treated in a modified clinic room rather than a hospital (see below).

To plan these procedures one needs high-quality diagnostic imaging to

accurately show the severity and extent of the diseased vessel. In the Harvey Suite, Jersey we are able to offer a specialist vascular ultrasound immediately after the consultation. This is a safe and painless investigation that allows reassurance that all is well, or a definitive plan to correct or control the disorder. In the arterial system it is recommended that men over the age of 65 years have an abdominal scan to check for aneurysms as early detection may allow treatment before rupture. Patients who suffer with calf pains during walking or cold feet may be found to have a blocked artery if a leg scan is performed, and up to 20% of strokes are caused by a narrowing of the carotid artery which is visible by scanning the neck.

ULTRASOUND ASSESSMENT

We have developed a particular interest in ultrasound-based assessment and treatment of varicose veins, which affect 20% of the population and are not always just a cosmetic problem. They can be responsible for throbbing, aching or itching of the leg, and severe varicose disease can result in pigmentation, eczema and ulceration. For more than 50 years the usual surgical treatment for was an operation called "stripping", where the main faulty (saphenous) vein in the leg was removed under general anaesthetic, and full recovery could take weeks.



Over the past 10 years the treatment of vascular diseases has been transformed from one often requiring major, invasive surgery towards keyhole techniques which allow a rapid return to normal activity

Nowadays we can offer a variety of keyhole treatments which are usually performed under local anaesthetic. The most popular of these is VNUS radiofrequency ablation where the saphenous vein is heated with radiowaves and seals within a few days. We have performed over 2000 of these in London and performed the first VNUS closure in Jersey in 2010. Patients are able to enjoy conversation and music during the 45 minute procedure, have a cup of tea afterwards and walk out of the office when ready. Regular strolls and activity are encouraged over the next two weeks as the leg heals, which makes the possession of dogs, children and a coastline an asset!

Mr Sudip Ray is a Consultant Vascular Surgeon with a specialist interest in the treatment of varicose veins and disorders of the circulation. He qualified in medicine at Oxford University and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. He practices in central London and also consults from the Harvey Suite, Lido Medical Centre in Jersey and the Health Exchange in Guernsey. For further information please visit www.endovein.co.uk or call 01534 625000.

