



For Immediate Release

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New procedure helps eliminate varicose veins

Radiofrequency used to treat painful condition of legs

Wilmington, DE (February 24, 2004) – Venous closure, a minimally invasive surgical procedure to correct varicose veins, is now available at Christiana Care.

The procedure relieves leg pain and swelling, improves discoloration, minimizes scarring and requires less recovery time compared with traditional vein stripping procedures used to treat the condition.

“As with every surgical procedure, we are trying to become less invasive and more oriented to trying to treat the underlying cause,” says Sonya Tuerff, M.D., one of several vascular surgeons currently performing venous closures at Christiana Care’s two outpatient surgicenters. The surgeon makes a small incision and inserts a thin catheter equipped with a radiofrequency (RF) attachment. The RF attachment induces the diseased vein to collapse and seal shut. Following the procedure, healthy veins develop, restore normal blood flow and improve symptoms and appearance.

“Patients have been very satisfied with this procedure because it successfully treats venous reflux in a cosmetically appealing way, with faster recovery when compared to traditional vein stripping,” according to Tuerff.

Varicose veins, pain and swelling are symptoms of venous reflux, condition where damaged or diseased valves cause backward blood flow and blood pooling in the legs. In the past, procedures to correct varicose veins included “vein stripping” surgery and laser surgery, which caused considerably more trauma to the leg than the RF venous closure and required a longer recovery period.

For example, in the vein stripping procedure, the surgeon makes an incision in the groin and ties off the diseased veins, then uses a stripper tool to pull the diseased vein out through a second incision just above the calf. Patients enduring vein stripping surgery might expect up to three weeks of limited activity.

The new vein closure procedure now available at Christiana Care is far less painful and invasive. The procedure takes less than an hour per leg. After the catheter is withdrawn, a bandage is placed over the tiny incision and the leg may be wrapped for a few days to aid healing. Doctors may ask patients to walk, wear compression stockings and avoid standing for long periods. Eighty percent of patients return to normal activity in one or two days.

Patients must be referred by their primary care physician and must have an ultra-sound evaluation before scheduling the procedure. Patients who have had previous surgery for varicose veins may not be able to have vein closure on the same leg.

Christiana Care Health System, which traces its roots back to 1888, is one of the region's largest not-for profit health care providers, serving the people of Delaware as well as neighboring Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. A teaching hospital, Christiana Care is recognized as a regional center for excellence in cardiology, cancer and women's health services, as well as Level-I trauma care and Level-3 neonatal intensive care (both highest intensity). Christiana Care operates two hospitals, long-term and transitional care services and an extensive range of outpatient and home health services. Last year, Christiana Care provided more than \$37 million of charity care.