

# HEARTBEAT

ISSUE 5

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FALL 2007

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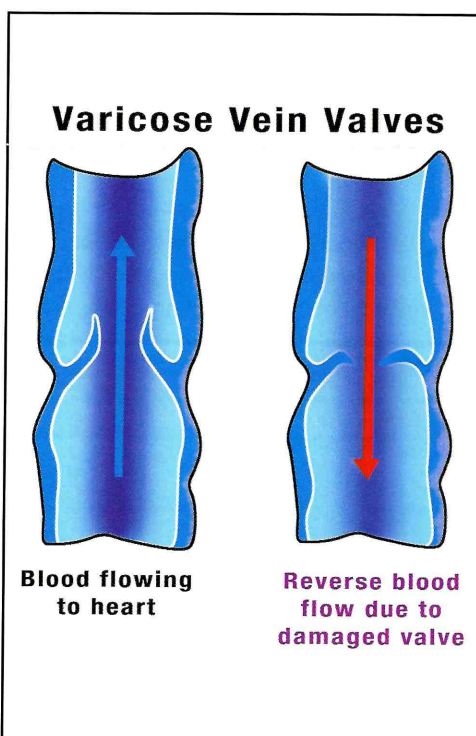
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## New Alternatives for Treatment of Vein Disease

In general there are two categories of vein disease. Varicose veins are described as enlarged "rope-like" veins that are twisted and measure  $>1/4"$  in diameter. They generally grow in size over time and can cause tingling, itching, substantial pain, and even leg ulcers. Spider veins are the small, thread-like colored veins on the surface of the skin; many people seek treatment for spider veins for cosmetic reasons, but they may cause discomfort also. In America, 25% of women and 15% of men are affected by vein disease. Contributing factors include heredity, vein reflux, pregnancy, obesity, and long hours standing or sitting.

In the past, vein stripping was performed in the hospital operating room under general anesthesia. This procedure was painful with a long re-



Endovenous laser therapy requires a minimal incision with insertion of a thin laser fiber into the diseased vein. The healthcare provider delivers laser energy through the fiber, which then causes the vein to close or sclerose as the fiber is gradually pulled back. This procedure is done in an outpatient setting with return to normal activity, especially walking, immediately following the procedures. With completion of the procedure, your blood will now flow through healthy veins back to your heart.

An initial evaluation is performed in the office using a diagnostic ultrasound, which is a non-invasive test that uses sound waves to create pictures. It can also show blood flow, which helps your doctor determine where the reflux or vein leakage is occurring. If reflux is found, endove-

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covery time and an average of four weeks off from work. Unfortunately, this operation took care of the visible varicose veins, but not the underlying reflux in the great or small saphenous vein. Without treatment of the reflux, the varicosities were likely to reoccur in two to three years.

Within the last few years, the use of laser has become an accepted alternative to surgical vein stripping.





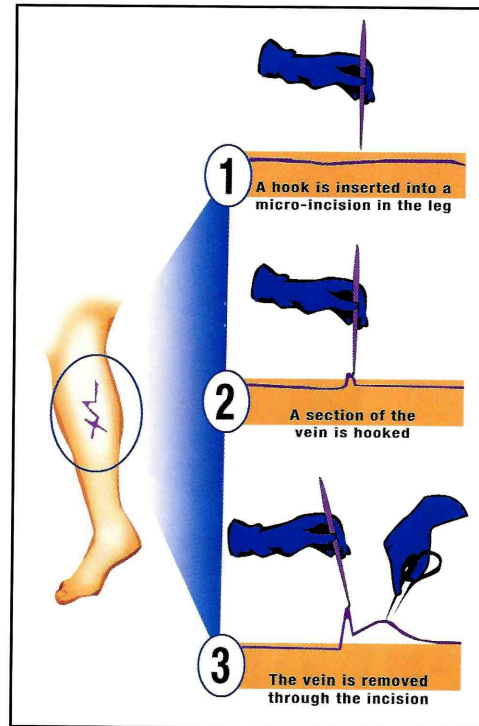
# Alternatives for Treatment for Vein Disease

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nous laser treatment may be recommended depending on your condition. Once the leak is treated, stab phlebectomy may be recommended as adjunct therapy for remaining varicose veins.

The affected leg is then bandaged and wrapped after treatment. The bandage or compression stocking will be worn for 48 hours until the follow up appointment. Another ultrasound will be performed confirming closure of the saphenous vein and checking the deep-vein system for any complications. After the follow-up appointment, the compression stockings need to be worn during daytime hours only for two weeks to help decrease any postoperative pain and complete closure of the vein. During this period, mild bruising and soreness is expected, but it is important to proceed with normal activity to help the healing process.

With the underlying disease process fixed, sometimes there is a need to perform stab phlebectomy. This procedure for larger protruding veins requires only local anesthesia and tiny



incisions leaving minimal, if any, scarring. Most often phlebectomy is performed at the time of the endovenous laser ablation. Patients are very satisfied with the immediate resolution of the varicosities.

Sclerotherapy continues to be the standard treatment for spider veins. A special solution, Sotratetradecol, the

only FDA-approved sclerosing agent, is injected into the veins, causing them to close, shrink, and disappear. This is performed in the office and does not require any anesthesia.

There are many self-care tips for your problem veins. The following suggestions can help reduce the symptoms of problem veins, slow the development of new veins, and comfort your legs during pregnancy. The more self-care you can do the better your results will be. Compression stockings fit tightly around your legs applying pressure to allow blood flow upwards away from your ankles and feet to your heart. Check with your doctor before buying or wearing compression stockings; they do come in a variety of styles, sizes, and gradient pressures. These can be purchased at our office, a pharmacy, online, or at a surgical supply store.

Exercising your calf and thigh muscles promotes blood flow back to the heart using the muscle pump theory. Walking is the best choice, roughly 30 minutes a day. If you have a job that requires long standing periods, try working your calves by rising on your toes multiple times in a row, rest, then repeat.

Elevation is another self-care approach. Raising your legs above the level of your heart allows gravity to assist your blood return. This should be performed two to three times a day for 15 minutes each time.

Evaluating your lifestyle may help also. Losing weight may help relieve some of the symptoms in your legs. Watching the amount of sodium you consume in your diet is a factor because high amounts of sodium can cause fluid retention and swelling. Also, during long car rides or plane flights, stop hourly for a walk or stroll down the aisles, while doing calf raises in your seat.

If you have any further questions or need an evaluation for vein disease please call our office at 251.639.0505.

## Corner

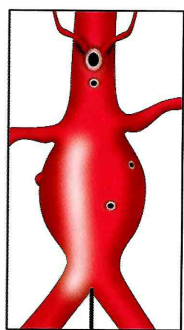
Patient

### Fast Facts on Coumadin

- coumadin thins blood to lessen the chance of blood clots
- a blood test (INR) must be done frequently to monitor how thin the blood gets
- eating foods high in vitamin K may reduce the effectiveness of coumadin
- foods high in vitamin K include asparagus, avocados, broccoli, cabbage, green onions, soy beans, lettuce, spinach, olive oil, and canola oil
- patients can be on coumadin for many reasons; please be aware of your condition (Afib, heart valves, prior clot, etc.)



## New Medicare coverage for AAA screening

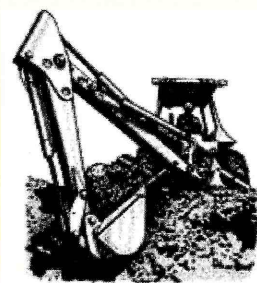


Aorta with large  
abdominal aneurysm

**B**eginning January 1st, 2007, Medicare announced coverage of ultrasound screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) as part of a patient's initial preventative physical examination. A person may be at risk for an abdominal aortic aneurysm if he or she has a family history of AAA or is a man age 65-75 who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in his lifetime. Please contact our office to help schedule this exam.

## Construction begins at new office site

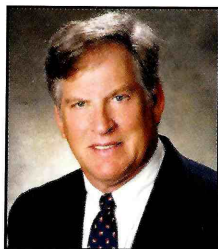
**C**ardiovascular Associates has recently purchased land and begun renovations at a new office site on the corner of Springhill Avenue and Margaret Street. This office will have two operating suites for minor surgical procedures. These procedures include the vein surgeries such as sclerotherapy and endovenous laser ablation along with some renal surgeries formally done in the hospital. Look for our new office to open in Spring of 2008!



# IN GOOD HANDS

Although many think of them simply as heart surgeons, the physicians at Cardiovascular Associates are trained in all areas of cardiac, thoracic, and vascular surgery. Their backgrounds include training with the distinguished surgeon Dr. Michael DeBakey of Houston, attendance of various medical schools across the country, and yearly postgraduate courses. All are Fellows of the American College of Surgeons, and hold membership in multiple professional societies.

*Michael Damrich, M.D.*



- ◆ General, vascular, cardiovascular and thoracic training with Dr. DeBakey
- ◆ Diplomate, American Board of Surgery, American Board of Thoracic Surgery
- ◆ Fellow, American College of Surgeons

*Carl Maltese, M.D.*



- ◆ General, vascular, cardiovascular and thoracic training with Dr. DeBakey
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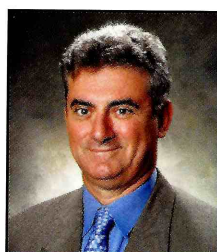
- ◆ General, vascular, cardiovascular and thoracic training with Dr. DeBakey
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*William Higgs, M.D.*



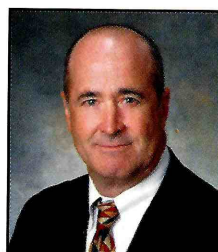
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*Terri Rice*



M.S. Nursing in Critical Care

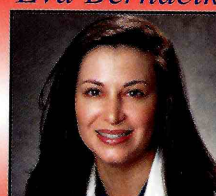
*Nicole Lowe*



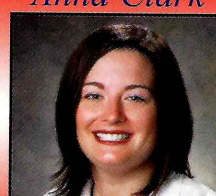
*Christy Paragone*



*Eva Bernacik*



*Anna Clark*

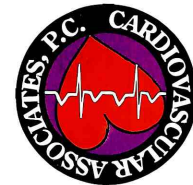


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# HEARTBEAT



## In This Issue..

- New Treatment for Vein Disease
- Facts on Coumadin
- Medicare Coverage Update
- New Springhill Office Construction

## Comprehensive List of Surgeries

### Cardiac

- ◆ Coronary artery bypass
- ◆ Repair of replacement of valves of the heart
- ◆ Repair of congenital defects and patent ductus arteriosus
- ◆ Implantation of pacemaker and defibrillator devices
- ◆ Mini-maze for atrial fibrillation

### Thoracic

- ◆ Repair of chest wall defects
- ◆ Lung biopsy/Removal of lung lesions/Lung cancer surgery
- ◆ Esophageal repair/Resection of esophageal cancer

### Vascular

- ◆ Carotid endarterectomy
- ◆ Repair of abdominal aortic aneurysms/Endovascular option
- ◆ Peripheral vascular surgery & peripheral balloon angioplasty
- ◆ Dialysis access grafts
- ◆ Varicose vein & other vein disease
- ◆ Vascular studies

### Other

- ◆ Spinal exposure for neurosurgery and orthopedic surgery
- ◆ Consultant to hyperbaric and wound care center