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New Varicose Vein Treatment

BY PATTI THEROS

Warm weather is just around the corner. And while most of us long for the days to put away our heavy clothing, others, with varicose veins, confront the summer dilemma: to wear shorts or not to wear shorts.

According to the American College of Phlebology, it is estimated that more than 80 million Americans suffer from some form of venous disease which includes spider, reticular (medium-sized blue veins below the surface), and varicose veins. Varicose veins are the more complex problem veins. They are the large ropey veins that protrude above the skin. Not only do they create a cosmetic concern, patients with varicose veins can also experience leg fatigue, heaviness and throbbing pain.

People with varicose veins often forgo or delay surgery to remove the veins. "Many people think removal of the veins is cosmetic surgery," says general surgeon Dr. Drew Georgeson, DO, FACS. "But in reality, varicose veins can be a medical condition. It is a progressive disease and the problem veins can become painful and eventually ulcerated."

Another reason patients delay surgery is that the traditional surgical treatment for varicose veins called "stripping" often requires several incisions, a long operation, and a long recovery period up to several weeks. According to Georgeson, 47, "The traditional surgical method for removal of varicose veins requires a surgeon to mark with an ink pen the patient's problematic veins while the patient is standing up prior to surgery. When the surgery takes place, however, the patient is lying down and the surgeon cannot identify the problem veins without relying



Pictured is the surgical team at Bon Secours Cottage Hospital which includes Grosse Pointe surgeon Dr. Drew Georgeson; registered nurse Judy Dettloff, formerly of Grosse Pointe; and registered nurse Nancy Wittenberg of GP Woods.

on what has been shown to be the unreliable markings."

Today there is a new technique for removing varicose veins in southeast Michigan and it's only being performed by Dr. Georgeson at Grosse Pointe's BonSecours Cottage Hospital. The method is called Transilluminated Powered Phlebectomy. It is a clinically tested, minimally invasive surgical technique for varicose vein removal. The technique is performed using the TRIVEX System that uses a transilluminating light that "lights up the problem veins" during the surgery.

The idea came when we (surgeons) felt there had to be a better way than the traditional tedious method for removal of veins, says Georgeson. This method allows surgeons to see the problem veins rather than rely on pen markings.

"Basically the new surgery technique requires fewer incisions, less scarring, and better results," says Dr. Georgeson. "I was involved with the development of the product and watched it evolve into a very successful procedure." After practicing medicine for 12 years in the Chicago area, Dr. Georgeson recently moved back to the Grosse Pointes with his family, bringing this technique to BonSecours Cot-

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In addition to making and serving delicious, healthy breads, Breadsmith takes community involvement very seriously, and it's an important part of their philosophy. They proudly make bread donations to local charities every day.

Breadsmith is located at 19487 Mack Avenue, Grosse Pointe Woods, (313) 417-0648. Hours are Monday - Saturday, 7 am to 6 pm. Closed Sundays.

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tage Hospital. This was an easy transition as Georgeson grew up in Grosse Pointe Woods and graduated from Grosse Pointe North High School in 1976.

"The vein removal technique was FDA approved in 1999 and it is being used around the world as a safe and effective method for removing varicose veins," says Georgeson.

Georgeson is the only doctor in southeast Michigan who is trained to perform the technique. He is a board certified surgeon with extensive training in minimally invasive surgery (tiny incisions that translate into a quick recovery and better cosmetic results), an absolute prerequisite in safely performing this procedure.

"For years, minimally invasive surgery has been applied to many aspects of general surgery including gallbladder, appendix and hernias to name a few. But it hasn't been applied to varicose veins until recently," says Georgeson. "Being a surgeon allows me the ability to look at the problem and immediately help the patient by removing the disease. The wonderful thing about specializing in minimally-invasive techniques is that I can improve a patient's quality of life without interrupting their way of life."

And while Georgeson was happy to move back to Grosse Pointe, he missed his trained surgical team who helped him perform the surgery in Chicago. To alleviate the problem, Georgeson flew his Detroit team to Chicago to obtain the training. Judy Dettloff, RN, formerly of Grosse Pointe; Nancy Wittenberg, RN, of Grosse Pointe Woods and Trena Behlow, a surgical technician, said the training was "a great learning experience" and they have seen great patient results. "Since there are fewer incisions, patients have less or no pain and they are moving around more quickly as compared to traditional surgery techniques," said Dettloff. "The surgery itself is actually shorter surgery because the surgeon can better see the problem veins."

The new surgical treatment option is outpatient surgery and requires light anesthesia. "Most of my patients walk to their car after the

procedure. And the first few days after surgery a patient wears soft bandages that do not limit mobility," says Georgeson. While this technique is appropriate for varicose veins, other non-surgical options do exist for smaller varicose and spider veins. Georgeson recommends some basic guidelines to follow when seeking treatment for varicose veins:

1. Do your research and get a non-invasive diagnosis of your vein system. This is often done with a simple ultrasound in a doctor's office. The evaluation will allow the doctor to map out any vein issues.

2. Decide on the best treatment option(s) with your physician. Not everyone is a candidate for laser surgery. "My legs were achy, painful, and I had swelling. I knew I had to do something," says Eastpointe resident Brenda Lubinski, 61, who works at a nursing home that requires her to be on her feet all day. Lubinski had both her legs operated on using the new TriVex treatment method last year. She is pain-free today.

3. Do a cost/benefit analysis of the recommend treatment options. Some health insurance plans will cover the surgery for medical reasons only. "In my case, my varicose veins were caused by a poor valve so my health insurance covered it," says 23-year old Jacqueline Easley of Fraser who had both of her legs operated on in August 2004 with the TriVex system.

4. Evaluate the side effects of the surgery and recovery time. Easley said, "Within a month of the surgery, I was back to my exercise program which includes running."

5. Before the surgery, get referrals to a surgeon. Find out the credentials. Find out if the surgeon is board certified in surgery and the level of expertise.

For more information and to learn more about surgical treatment options for varicose veins, the public is welcome to attend a free lecture at Cottage Hospital in Grosse Pointe Farms on April 20 from 7-8 p.m. Dr. Georgeson will be the presenter. For more information about the lecture, please call 586.779.0220 or visit the website www.amerivein.com.

Patti Theros is a Grosse Pointe resident and free-lance writer for The Pointer.



PETS FOR POINTERS

This month's featured pets are Shelby and Rosie



"SHELBY"

She's a sweet female, spayed 10-year-old Bichon Poodle mix. Shelby was relinquished by her owner who moved into a nursing home. She weighs 15lbs and enjoys companionship and walks.

"ROSIE"

A calm and gentle 9-year-old Shepherd Collie mix, Rosie was found as a stray by a GPAAS volunteer. She is good with cats, dogs and kids, is spayed and weighs 60lbs.



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The April adoption dates are scheduled for Saturday, April 16 and 30, from 12 to 3 p.m.
The Pointer and GPAAS urge you to spay or neuter your pet.