Policy: Varicose vein procedures

Policy statement

Referral for varicose vein surgery may be appropriate if the following conditions are present:

- Lower-limb skin varicose eczema, thought to be caused by chronic venous insufficiency.
- Superficial vein thrombosis (characterised by the appearance of hard, painful veins) and suspected venous incompetence
- Recurrent or ascending superficial phlebitis (DVT risk may be as high as 10-20% at presentation)
- Venous leg ulcer in association with varicose veins (a break in the skin below the knee that has not healed within 2 weeks).
- Venous ulcers whether veins apparent or not
- A healed venous leg ulcer
- Severe swelling or pitting oedema
- Symptomatic varicose veins in the presence of arterial insufficiency (absent pedal pulses)
- Lipodermatosclerosis
- Incipient ulceration with erythema and skin induration

These criteria apply to new patients and those who have previously had varicose vein surgery.

Treatment in all other circumstances is LOW PRIORITY

In the absence of these referral criteria and where there is evidence of exceptional clinical need, an Individual Funding Request can be made to the Low Priority Treatments Panel: http://www.kernowccg.nhs.uk/get-info/individual-funding-requests/

Patients not suitable for referral to vascular surgical clinics for NHS treatment

- Patients with no symptoms or skin changes associated with venous disease.
- Patients whose concerns are cosmetic including telangectasia and reticular veins.
- Patients with mild symptoms including itch, ache, mild swelling, minor changes of skin eczema and haemosiderosis
Notes
The policy was formulated by the KCCG Elective care Board with Consultant Vascular Surgeons in Cornwall to assist General Practitioners in selecting patients appropriate for referral for varicose vein surgery.

Despite the NICE clinical guidance 168 recommending that patients with mild symptoms should be offered intervention, KCCG has decided that, in view of the high prevalence of varicose veins and the difficulty predicting who will benefit the most and from what treatment, Cornwall will continue to apply local referral criteria for varicose vein intervention.

References:
Nice Guideline here http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG168