

The Vascular Disease Foundation

An update on the recent initiatives and educational progress of the VDF.

BY PETER GLOVICZKI, MD

The Vascular Disease Foundation (VDF) was formed in 1998 to improve public recognition of the prevalence and seriousness of vascular disease. It is a national not-for-profit, public 501(c)(3) foundation that promotes vascular public education and vascular disease awareness. The VDF is broad in scope, encompassing all vascular diseases, including the arterial, venous, and lymphatic systems. The VDF is multidisciplinary and is not derived from a single professional discipline. The VDF Board includes public members concerned about vascular disease, and professional members from the Society for Vascular Medicine and Biology, Society of Interventional Radiology, Society for Vascular Nursing, Society for Vascular Surgery/American Vascular Association, Society for Clinical Vascular Surgery, Society for Vascular Ultrasound, American College of Cardiology, and the American Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation (Table 1).

The VDF Board of Directors represents more than 40,000 health care professionals. The mission of the VDF is to reduce the widespread prevalence and effects of vascular diseases by increasing public awareness of the benefits of prevention, prompt diagnosis, and comprehensive management and rehabilitation.

To achieve its goals, the Foundation maintains a Web site, disseminates electronic and printed educational information to the public, fosters vascular disease patient advoca-

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cacy initiatives, and provides educational information about vascular disease to serve the individuals who suffer from these syndromes, as well as those who are at risk for development of the common arterial and venous disorders. Initiatives in 2004 continued to increase the ability of the VDF to offer broad-based, intersocietal vascular public education and advocacy.

PAD COALITION

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) has been a primary focus of the VDF with the main goal of increasing public awareness of claudication and critical limb ischemia. Ideally, long-term public education for any common disease is best performed by bringing together groups and organizations concerned with the same cause. During the past 2 years, the VDF achieved significant success by bringing together a large number of national organizations and societies, with the aim of organizing a national PAD awareness campaign. In January 2003, the VDF cohosted a strategic planning meeting with the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Seventeen organizations participated and agreed to form a broad-based vascular coalition. Results of the meeting were published by the NHLBI in May 2003 (http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/heart/other/pad_sum.pdf).

Also, Alan Hirsch, MD, Alain Drooz, MD, this author, and the VDF Board have coauthored an article that was published in the *Journal of Vascular Surgery*.¹ On June 17, 2004, the VDF cohosted the Public Education Strategy Meeting with the NHLBI in Bethesda, Maryland, which brought together coalition

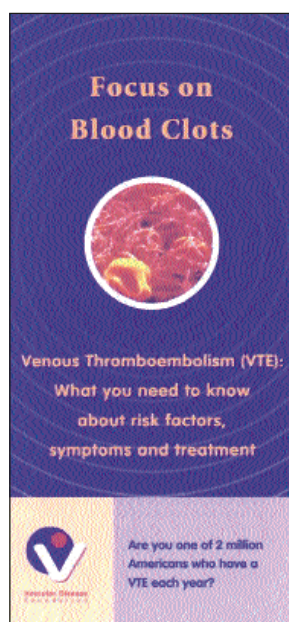


Figure 1. VDF pamphlet on venous thromboembolism.

partners and sponsors to establish initial plans for a national PAD campaign. The VDF, its eight society partners, and the NHLBI were joined by the American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, American Podiatric Medical Association, American Radiological Nurses Association, and the Peripheral Vascular Surgery Society. The NHLBI has agreed to help fund a public PAD awareness campaign from 2005 to 2008.

VDF AND VENOUS DISEASE

Both acute and chronic venous diseases are public health problems and affect millions of Americans. VDF is profoundly concerned about the prevention and treatment of venous thromboembolism (Figure 1) and is dedicated to decreasing the high mortality from pulmonary embolism (PE). Each year in the US, 60,000 people die of PE, making it the third leading cause of death. Chronic venous disease, a painful and disabling condition that is

TABLE 1. VASCULAR DISEASE FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2004

Name	Position	Society	Location
Sheryl Benjamin	Executive Director		Lakewood, CO (non-voting)
Byron Chrisman, JD			Boulder, CO
Mark Creager, MD	Treasurer	American College of Cardiology	Boston, MA
Alain Drooz, MD	President-Elect	Society of Interventional Radiology	Vienna, VA
Janette Durham, MD		Society of Interventional Radiology	Denver, CO
David Faxon, MD	Ad Hoc Board Member, Special Liaison from American Heart Association	American Heart Association	Chicago, IL
William Flinn, MD		Society for Vascular Surgery /American Vascular Association	Baltimore, MD
Judith Fried, RN, RVT, CVN		Society for Vascular Ultrasound	Bismarck, ND
Peter Gloviczki, MD	President	Society for Vascular Surgery	Rochester, MN
Alan Hirsch, MD	Past-President	Society for Vascular Medicine and Biology	Minneapolis, MN
Marge Lovell, RN	Secretary	Society for Vascular Nursing	Toronto, ON
Pamela McKinnie			Boulder, CO
Dennis Newman	Chairman of the Board		Golden, CO
Judith Regensteiner, PhD			Denver, CO
Robert Rutherford, MD	Advisor to the Board		Corpus Christi, TX
Anton Sidawy, MD		Society for Clinical Vascular Surgery	Washington, DC
Kerry Stewart, EdD		American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation	Baltimore, MD
Mary Yost			Atlanta, GA

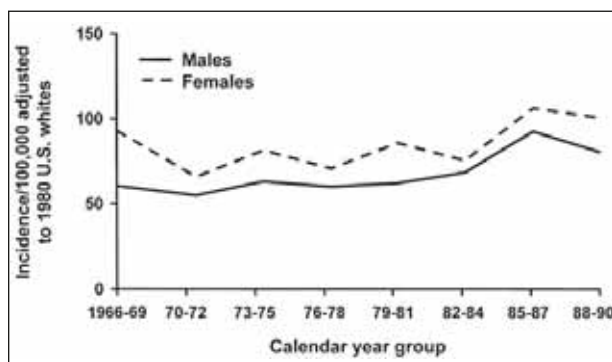


Figure 2. Age-adjusted incidence of venous stasis syndrome among residents of Olmsted County, Minnesota, 1966 to 1990, by sex and calendar year.²

much less lethal, but is much more prevalent, needs and deserves more attention. Public awareness on prevention and availability of new minimally invasive treatments can provide relief to millions of Americans with varicose veins. More importantly, one person in 1,000 has more advanced chronic venous insufficiency (Figure 2), and approximately 1 million have venous ulcers.² Treatment of the incompetent superficial and perforating veins can provide significant improvement to, or even cure, many

patients. Combining efforts with other organizations, such as the American Venous Forum, the American Venous Forum Foundation, and the Coalition to Prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis, the VDF will extend efforts in the coming years to significantly improve public education of venous disease.

VDF NATIONAL CORPORATE ADVISORY BOARD

As a major initiative in 2004, the VDF established an advisory board and invited leaders of the medical industry to help develop a long range plan of public education about acute and chronic arterial and venous disease in the US. In addition to PAD, main initiatives for the coming years include chronic venous disease (including varicose veins, chronic venous insufficiency, and venous ulcers), acute venous thromboembolism, aortic aneurysms, carotid artery disease, and stroke. Founding members of the advisory board include industry leaders from Diomed Holdings Inc. (Andover, MA), W.L. Gore & Associates (Flagstaff, AZ), AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals (Wilmington, DE), Bard Peripheral Vascular (Tempe, AZ), Cordis Endovascular (a Johnson & Johnson company, Miami, FL), and Bristol-Myers Squibb/Sanofi-Synthelabo Partnership (New York, NY). The advisory board is allied

with the VDF in the belief that patient quality of life and longevity can be improved through education and prevention, prompt diagnosis, comprehensive treatment, and effective rehabilitation of arterial and venous disease. These inaugural members made a major commitment to sponsor educational programs dedicated to vascular disease.

THE VDF WEB SITE

Under the direction of a group of vascular specialists, the VDF Web site www.vdf.org provides a wide coverage of vascular information on prevention, treatment, and outcome of arterial and venous diseases. The Web site has more than 600 visitors daily, and more than 250 other Web sites list the Foundation as a link. The site has an easy-to-surf format, with reader-friendly information, pictures of "real-life" patients, shared personal stories, and video clips to reach the public and inform them about vascular diseases. Features such as a discount drug program, the Excellence in Care Award, and online giving enhance the usefulness of the site for our visitors. We have a special section on memorials to honor the memory of friends and family members. Sections on deep vein thrombosis and PE were posted in early 2004. A new feature of the site is a select list of clinical trials that are currently enrolling patients with vascular disease.

NEWSLETTER

Our free newsletter, *Keeping in Circulation*, is published in four issues each year. The focus broadened to cover topics related to all vascular diseases and related health issues. Each issue includes a new series, such as "A Daily Dose of Walking," "Spotlight on Sponsors," and first-hand patient stories. Our circulation numbers passed 12,000 individual subscribers and many vascular specialists in clinics and waiting rooms request additional copies. Our spring 2004 newsletter focused on abdominal aortic aneurysms and Raynaud's disease, whereas the summer edition focused on critical limb ischemia and amputation. The fall issue deals with renal artery stenosis and vascular malformation. The upcoming issue will feature varicose veins and venous ulcers.

PRINTED EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

The Foundation's brochure "Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) Increases Your Risk for Heart Attack and Stroke" is widely distributed nationally. Clinics, doctors' offices, health fairs, and individuals request the pamphlet and other printed materials through the Web site and our toll free number. This spring, we translated the PAD brochure into Spanish, and over the summer we published a new in-depth patient resource on venous thromboembolism.

ADVOCACY

The Foundation advocates that the rules recently proposed to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for cardiovascular screening support ankle-brachial index measurement as a part of screening. VDF also joined the National Aneurysm Alliance, founded by the American Vascular Association and the Society for Vascular Surgery to introduce the Screening Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms Very Efficiently (SAAAVE) Act, which would direct Medicare to cover ultrasound screening for abdominal aortic aneurysms.

JACOBSON AWARD FOR PHYSICIAN EXCELLENCE

In 2004, Julius Jacobson II, MD, a pioneer microsurgeon and vascular surgeon, seeded the award via a gift to the VDF. Criteria for nominations include a significant contribution to the prevention and treatment of vascular disease and to vascular education programs, either to health professionals or patients. Frank Veith, MD, the William J. von Liebig Chair for Vascular Surgery, Montefiore Medical Center, and Professor of Surgery, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, New York was the first recipient of the award. Dr. Veith hosts the annual international VEITHsymposium, which has been recognized during the past 3 decades as the foremost educational program for vascular specialists in the world.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE VDF

The VDF needs the support of professional organizations and individual volunteers to carry out its mission. Opportunities to help include volunteering for a PAD Coalition Committee, writing and editing newsletter articles and content for the Web site, and helping to answer general e-mail patient queries. If you are willing to volunteer on any of these projects, please contact Sheryl Benjamin, Executive Director, at (303) 949-8337; Sheryl.Benjamin@vdf.org.

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2. Heit JA, Rooke TW, Silverstein MD, et al. Trends in the incidence of venous stasis syndrome and venous ulcer: a 25-year population-based study. *J Vasc Surg.* 2001;33:1022-1027.