Vascular Disease and its Treatment

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Vascular disease is a class of diseases of the blood vessels- the arteries and veins of the circulatory system of the body. It is a subgroup of cardiovascular disease. Disorders in this vast network of blood vessels, can cause a range of health problems which can be severe or prove fatal.

Vascular disease is any condition that affects the network of your blood vessels.

This network is known as your vascular or circulatory system. "Vascular" comes from a Latin word for hollow container. If your entire network of blood vessels were stretched end-to-end, they could circle the Earth multiple times.

Some of these vessels move blood. As your heart beats, it pumps blood with oxygen and nutrients to feed your tissues and carry off waste. Arteries move blood away from the heart.

Lymph vessels and lymph nodes are part of a separate cleaning system that rids your body of damaged cells. They also help protect you from infections and cancer. The vessels pick up fluid from tissues throughout your body. That fluid drains back into veins under your collarbones.

Vascular diseases range from problems with your arteries, veins, and vessels that carry lymph to disorders that affect how your blood flows. A disease can mean your tissues aren’t getting enough blood, a condition called ischemia, as well as other serious, even life-threatening, problems.

Vascular disease is a pathological state of large and medium muscular arteries and is triggered by endothelial cell dysfunction. Because of factors like pathogens, oxidized LDL particles and other inflammatory stimuli endothelial cells become active. The process causes thickening of the vessel wall, forming a plaque that consists of proliferating smooth muscle cells, macrophages and lymphocytes. The plaque results in a restricted blood flow which will decrease the amount of oxygen and nutrients that reach certain organs, the plaque might rupture causing the formation of clots.

It can be difficult to make a vascular disease diagnosis since there are a variety of symptoms that a person can have, also family history and a physical examination are important. The physical exam may be different depending on the type of vascular disease. In the case of a peripheral vascular disease the physical exam consists in checking the blood flow in the legs.

Treatment varies with the type of vascular disease; in the case of renal artery disease, information from a meta-analysis indicated that balloon angioplasty results in improvement of diastolic blood pressure and a reduction in antihypertensive drug requirements. In the case of peripheral artery disease, preventing complications is important; without treatment, sores or gangrene (tissue death) may occur.

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