

Fixing Aneurysms without Major Surgery

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We are bombarded daily with scary information about what blocked arteries can do to our quality of life and the threats they may pose to life itself. We watch our cholesterol, monitor our fat intake and try to reduce stress.

In addition to our best preventive efforts, it is important to schedule screening tests to check for peripheral artery disease (PAD) that is caused by arteriosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries. An estimated 10 million Americans suffer from these fatty deposits in the arteries that lead to narrowing of the vessels and PAD.

The Florida International University Endovascular Institute at Jackson North Medical Center offers state-of-the-art investigations and treatment for PAD, headed by director and endovascular surgeon Dr. Håkan Charles-Harris.



Often There Are No Symptoms

Vascular disease is among the leading causes of death in the United States, yet is generally asymptomatic until a catastrophic event occurs, such as an aneurysm rupture or a stroke. Although preventive screening is available, millions of Americans who are at risk for death from vascular disorders remain unaware of their risk.

"Fifty percent of patients who have major limb amputations from untreated PAD die within five years," said Dr. Charles-Harris. "Endovascular procedures dramatically reduce mortality and prolong life."

If you are suffering from leg pain or cramping, pain after walking, erectile dysfunction, or if you smoke or have been diagnosed with vascular disease, you may benefit from the variety of diagnostic and minimally invasive procedures offered through the Endovascular Institute.

Minimal Procedure Provides Maximum Relief

Carmelo Gonzalez experienced miraculous results after his procedure at Jackson North.

Carmelo had an abdominal aortic aneurysm, which is a balloon-like bulge in the main artery that carries blood to the lower part of the body and the legs. If his aneurysm had burst, it could have been fatal within minutes.

Entering through a small incision in the femoral artery, Dr. Charles-Harris and his team threaded a stent graft through the artery until it reached the aneurysm. Real-time imaging allowed them to ensure careful and precise placement. Once the stent graft was in place, it took over blood flow for the portion of the artery that contained the aneurysm.

"After the second day in the hospital, I went home!" Gonzalez said. "My recuperation was incredible."

While relatively new – its first practical use was in the 1990s – endovascular repair is an established alternative to "open repair" of aneurysms. After the procedure, the patient spends less time in the intensive care unit, and in the hospital overall, than with traditional surgery. They also have an earlier return to their normal activities.

"The service and care I received from all the staff at Jackson North was excellent," Gonzalez said. "My wife and I are so grateful for their professionalism and their loving and compassionate care."

Are You at Risk?

Individuals 55 years of age or older with cardiovascular risk factors such as a history of hypertension, diabetes mellitus, smoking, high blood cholesterol levels, or known cardiovascular disease may benefit from preventive screening for vascular disease.

To make an appointment at the FIU Endovascular Institute at Jackson North Medical Center, call 1-855-CURE-PAD.