

UT Medical Group Vascular Access Specialists Improve Quality of Life for Dialysis Patients

Chronic kidney disease is a growing problem, caused in part by rising rates of diabetes and high blood pressure. When the kidneys lose most of their ability to function (end stage kidney disease) dialysis is required to keep the patient alive. Although dialysis can be a lifesaving treatment, many patients often develop infections, clogged access tubes, and other complications. The board certified doctors at the **University Vascular Access Center (UVAC)** are specially trained in procedures that prevent and treat these and other complications of dialysis, ensuring early identification and reducing the chance of further complications.

Traditionally, many vascular access services were available only in the hospital. The University Vascular Access Center now offers these procedures in a convenient, outpatient setting.

TYPES OF VASCULAR ACCESS FOR DIALYSIS

Patients with end stage kidney disease have their blood cleaned through *hemodialysis* or *peritoneal dialysis*. In hemodialysis, the patient's blood is removed from the body, filtered through the dialysis machine, then returned to the patient. The vascular access is the means by which doctors access the patient's blood to perform dialysis.

Before doctors create the vascular access, patients undergo *vein mapping* to determine which vascular access is the best choice for their condition. The patients are then referred for vascular access placement, a minor surgical procedure that is usually performed by vascular surgeons in the hospital. There are three types of vascular access used for hemodialysis: arteriovenous (AV) fistulas, grafts, and venous catheters. AV fistulas connect the patient's artery and vein naturally, arteriovenous grafts



connect the artery and vein with an artificial tube, and venous catheters are used for patients who are not suitable for fistulas or grafts.

Peritoneal dialysis cleans the patient's blood differently from hemodialysis. In peritoneal dialysis, a dialysis solution is pumped through a catheter into the abdominal area, where blood vessels in the abdomen lining (peritoneum) clean and filter the blood.

VASCULAR ACCESS SERVICES

UVAC provides a broad spectrum of vascular access procedures, including vein mapping and the placement and removal of catheters as well as management of fistulas and grafts. Through special x-ray images, the physicians usually assess problems associated with vascular access, such as clotting and narrowing within the fistulas or grafts. When needed, they can use balloons and sometimes stents to fix the problem with a procedure

called angioplasty. The center also provides the Memphis area's only placement, removal and repositioning of peritoneal dialysis catheters outside of a hospital setting.

MEDICAL TEAM

The physicians at UVAC are interventional nephrologists who are board certified in nephrology and have additional training and certification in vascular access procedures. All of the physicians also serve on the faculty of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center.

CONVENIENT CARE

The University Vascular Access Center is located at 6490 Mt. Moriah Road Extended in east Memphis. The facility has convenient parking and is easily accessible. For more information on the center and UT Medical Group, call 901-866-8425 or visit www.utmedicalgroup.com.