Comment on “PTFE Bypass to Below-knee Arteries: Distal Vein Collar or Not? A Prospective Randomised Multicentre Study”

The authors of this study have raised some relevant points about the data published by the Joint Vascular Research Group (JVRG). In particular they point out that the study only reliably assessed the benefit of a vein cuff following below-knee femoro-popliteal bypass and not femoro-distal surgery because of small numbers. However in their own study primary patency was only assessed in 13 of such patients at 3 years.

Although the JVRG study showed improved primary patency following below-knee bypass with a cuff at 3 years (45% v 19%) there was no difference in the limb salvage rates possibly reflecting the high mortality in patients with CLI. Although a difference in patency rates was present at 1 month follow-up this is not unexpected if a vein cuff enhances the technical success of the distal anastomosis. Further the difference between those with and without a vein cuff increased during follow-up to 3 years suggesting that the cuff conferred an additional benefit in the longer term. The potential mechanisms for this have been widely discussed.

Whilst there are no other randomised studies which have investigated the benefit of a distal vein cuff compared to standard PTFE alone primary patency rates at 3 years (50%, 54%) have been reported in two studies comparing PTFE with a vein cuff against pre-cuffed PTFE. Again these rates are much better than in the authors’ study thus raising further uncertainties about the SCAMICOS study.

Clearly there is a lack of level I evidence regarding the optimal technique for below-knee and crural bypass but the balance of opinion seems to favour the use of a vein cuff.

References


M.J. Gough
The General Infirmary at Leeds, Vascular Surgery, Great George Street, Leeds, W Yorks LS 1 3EX, United Kingdom
tel.: +44 113 392 2823; fax: +44 113 392 2624.
E-mail address: michael.gough@leedsth.nhs.uk
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Response to comments of Prof. M.J. Gough Concerning SCAMICOS

In response to Professor M.J. Gough’s invited commentary of our article we want to emphasise some further aspects concerning patency and limb salvage in relation to the vein collar anastomosis technique. Only one (not several) randomised clinical trial — with two publications — has previously reported patency and limb salvage with vein collar at the distal anastomosis of a PTFE-bypass. In that study from the Joint Vascular Research Group — JVRG, only 15 patients with a bypass to the crural vessels were randomised, and there was no difference in one-year primary patency rate in this group between vein collar and no vein collar patients. In the second report these 15 patients...