

IAC VEIN CENTER

Accreditation assures patients of highest vein care standards

Editor's Note: One of the points physicians cite when discussing problems in our specialty is the inconsistency in practices of experienced phlebologists and other physicians entering the field as a secondary revenue flow. One tool to make practices consistent is the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC) accreditation. One of the first practices to embrace IAC accreditation was the Vein Care Center Laser Specialists in Lima, Ohio, with a satellite office in Celina, Ohio. For this article, Manu Aggarwal, MHSA, MD, discussed IAC accreditation with RVT Ashley Watercutter.

Q. WATERCUTTER: When did you obtain your Vein Center accreditation?

A. AGGARWAL: The Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC) has been a part of the practice since 2007. That is when we first obtained our vascular accreditation for venous ultrasound. Since then, we have been successful in maintaining our accreditation for Vascular (with a focus on venous). When the IAC introduced Vein Center Accreditation in 2013, I knew just then that we had to apply and try to be one of the first to obtain it. So myself, and our technical director, started looking at the guidelines as soon as they were made available and began creating guidelines for clinical processes that we were already doing.

Then in 2015, it was announced that Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) of Massachusetts would require any facility performing endovenous laser ablations to be Vein Center Accredited by Sept. 1, 2015. This was later extended to Jan. 1, 2016. We obtained our Vein Center Accreditation in May 2015.

Q. Did you find it an easy process?

A. In the beginning, no. Anything new always appears daunting at first. We actually used a consultant to help us. It was their first time with Vein Center Accreditation...so it was a learning process for all of us.

The fortunate thing was that we were already Vascular Accredited (which is required) and so many of the process of quality improvement and quality assurance were already in place and being done. We just had to actually type out what we were already doing.

We had to buy a crash cart and stock it. Then we had to create a checklist for the cart to meet the Ohio State Board of Pharmacy rules as well and obtain a license from them as well. Just more checks and balances.



When patients see this IAC accreditation seal of approval, they can be assured that the facility they are trusting to treat their venous disorder has voluntarily gone through a rigorous evaluation of its medical and technical procedures by a group of medical experts who have evaluated each procedure and determined that it meets each requirement. Areas evaluated include physician training, physician experience, disease management, patient outcomes, complication rate per procedure, chart reviews, ultrasound imaging, continuing education, and detailed inspection of equipment and the facility among others.

But, it is good in the end. It allows everyone in the practice to know a standard of care in the practice of venous medicine. The front desk knows protocols all the way back to clinical staff and practice manager.

Q. Why did you decide to become Vein Center Accredited?

A. Our team feels strongly about board certification and then additional certifications for both physicians, staff and the facilities in which they practice. With mid-level providers now in the forefront, we need standard of care protocols established so that teams can all be on the same page.

Initially, when the news of BCBS of Massachusetts came out, we thought this was going to eventually trickle down to other insurance companies and Medicare. And it has. Medicare Novitas (Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, VA and Indian Health Services) requires accreditation (Vascular) for reimbursement when performing ultrasounds.

So, we would like to think we are ahead of the times. Eventually, we all will need to be accredited and our entire team feels that it's a good thing. We see patients from other facilities where ultrasounds do not match or plan of care doesn't match what is seen on the ultrasound. It's scary and it needed to be addressed. We think the IAC Accreditation is a start.

Q. Does the Vein Center Accreditation help your patients?

A. We would like to think yes. However, do patients care? We don't believe our patients even realize the extent of our knowledge and quality assurance programs we have implemented and perform

on a daily basis. We like to tell our patients we are on the only Vein Center Accredited facility in the area. We don't think they care. They say, "Oh, okay." They are probably more focused on what we will do to help them than the letters after everyone's name or the accreditation stickers on the front door.

What we had hoped for, aside from avoiding any reimbursement issues down the road, was for the accreditation to serve as a "stamp of approval" for primary care physicians and providers to seek us out for their patients. We were one of the first 50 in the country to obtain Vein Center Accreditation and the fourth one in the state of Ohio. We are still the only facility in our area. We do love bragging about that! However, it doesn't help when we have a larger problem of recognition with early diagnosis and treatment for simple conditions like venous eczema, superficial venous thrombophlebitis and worse, venous ulcers.

Yes, there was a small thought in our heads that we may be able to help educate our community on venous care and the early diagnosis and treatment needed, especially when it comes of venous ulcers. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. We still continue to battle cellulitis vs. phlebitis, ascending phlebitis vs worsening cellulitis, deep venous thrombosis treatment management and lymphedema diagnosis and treatment. It is an ongoing, uphill, educational obstacle course.

Q. Do you feel it was worth it?

A. Of course. We are so very proud of our team. We all believe in practicing venous medicine to the best of our abilities. We all are certified (ARDMS, CCI, Ohio State Medical Board, etc.) and we hold on to those designations dearly. We feel that standardizing vascular ultrasound and then Vein Center will improve patient outcomes. **VTN**



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