



THE VEIN KING

An interview with Luis Navarro, MD
 Founder/Medical Director, The Vein Treatment Center
 At the Forefront of Clinical Advancements

by Wendy Lewis

Anna K. developed bulging blue and red varicose veins on her legs during her early 20s, and has kept them under wraps ever since. She held off on treating these veins because she didn't want to spend several days in the hospital and even more time wrapped in compression garments. "I was scared, but then I started reading about some of the newer therapies out there, and decided it was now or never."

This summer, at age 45, she wore a pair of short shorts for the first time in two decades.

Anna is not alone. Thanks to advances in treating varicose and spider veins, such as lasers and less painful injection techniques, many people are choosing to have problem veins removed once and for all. There are many potential causes of the damage that leads to problem veins including family history, age, gender, pregnancy, excess weight, a sedentary lifestyle and trauma.

"In the past, vein treatments were invasive and required significant downtime, but that was then. Today veins can be removed in the office with no pain, bruising or recovery," explains Luis Navarro, M.D., FACS, FACPh, the Founder and Medical Director of The Vein Treatment Center in New York City and a pioneer in the field of vein treatments. "It's a completely different experience."

To date, tens of thousands of patients from all over the world have been treated at the Vein Treatment Center by Dr. Navarro along with his team of physicians and physician's assistants.

Patients typically present with complaints and concerns that range from the cosmetic to the functional including heaviness, aches and pains, night cramps, restless legs and ankle swelling. After a thorough evaluation, Navarro recommends the most appropriate treatment or treatments based on the type of vein; it's size, location, severity and the skin texture or color. Available methods vary from collapsing the veins from the inside with laser energy, physically removing the vein, different methods of sclerotherapy to a bespoke combination of the above.

"All patients receive a 30-45 minute consultation and this initial meeting provides us with the information we need to develop customized treatment plans for each patient," Navarro says.

SCLEROTHERAPY MIXOLOGIST

Originally from Spain, Dr. Navarro has decades of experience with sclerotherapy.

During a sclerotherapy session, he is adept at painlessly injecting a solution directly into the varicose vein, where it irritates the lining of the blood vessel, causing its destruction.

PAINLESS SCLEROTHERAPY PROCEDURE

- A single treatment takes only 30 minutes
- Stockings are not required to be worn, but the legs are wrapped with an elastic bandage for one or two hours to help keep the vein closed
- Avoid sun exposure by wearing pants or long skirts, or wearing SPF30
- Patients can resume normal activities immediately following treatment
- There may be minimal bruising for 2-4 weeks that may be covered with camouflage makeup if needed

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— Dr. Luis Navarro



Sclerotherapy
Female
35 years old
Vein: Reticular & Spider



Sclerotherapy for Hands
Female
56 years old
Vein: Enlarged hand veins



EVLT & Mini-Phlebectomy
Female
45 years old
Vein: Varicose

One of the main advantages of seeing a true vein specialist is their expertise in mixing several sclerotherapy solutions together. “We don’t use the same solution on every patient. We choose the best combination of solutions and other treatments for each individual patient,” says Dr. Navarro.

In the past, sclerotherapy injections were primarily liquid based, but today they are also available as foam. Foam sclerotherapy involves mixing the same solution with air or carbon dioxide. Varithena by BTG is a new foam sclerotherapy solution that was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in late 2013. Unlike liquid sclerotherapy, the foam has more direct contact with the vessel wall which allows it to work more efficiently and effectively. The foam can also be seen via ultrasound, which helps Dr. Navarro guide and monitor the therapy. It is usually the go-to for more severe cases.

“We have further advanced the widely used ultrasound-guided sclerotherapy by utilizing a thin, flexible tube (catheter) instead of a needle,” Navarro says. This is known as transcatheter image-guided occlusion sclerotherapy (TIGOS). “This is an even safer and more effective treatment of large veins in difficult areas like the groin and knee,” he says.

At the cornerstone of Dr Navarro’s success is innovation. He is constantly pushing the boundaries to improve outcomes and develop treatments that are faster, more effective, and more comfortable for patients.

One of the signature treatments offered at the Vein Treatment Center is called ‘Painless Cryo Sclero.’ Unique to Dr. Navarro, this method utilizes cooling cryotherapy to numb the skin before injection. “We use a blast of cold air with local mechanical pressure to numb skin and overload sensory fibers so pain is not felt. Procedures are practically painless with this method,” he explains. With cryosclerotherapy, bruising and redness are minimized and patients are comfortable during the treatment so they can tolerate more. As a result, they can do more injections in a single session, which means faster cosmetic results and less healing time.

As many as 40% of patients at the Vein Treatment center receive 80 injections in a single session. “In two to three days, we can do multiple intensive sessions,” says Dr. Navarro.

The number of treatment sessions required varies from patient to patient, depending on the number of veins treated, ability to heal, and the level of cosmetic perfection desired.

The Laser Revolution

Always at the forefront of clinical advancements, Endovenous Laser Ablation Technique (EVLT) was developed by Dr. Navarro and associates in 2000. This technique involves the use of laser and ultrasound technology to close the main vein from the inside. This minimally invasive procedure is performed under local anesthesia, requiring only a tiny nick in the skin. During EVLT, local anesthesia is given under color duplex ultrasound guidance, and then a tiny laser fiber is inserted directly into the problem vein through a catheter. Pulses of laser energy are released along the course of the vein to seal it off. This technique requires only a small nick in the skin. “Once the laser has sealed the vein, the fiber is removed and a steri-strip or a stitch closes the area,” he says. “Patients who need a mini-phlebectomy treatment for the smaller branches can have it performed at the same time,” he says.

EVLT has since been adopted by physicians all over the world. “Today’s EVLT makes costly hospitalizations, the need for general anesthesia, large, visible incisions from surgery, and downtime for recovery completely unnecessary,” he says.

Ambulatory or mini- phlebectomy bridges the gap between sclerotherapy and more invasive procedures. The procedure involves removing the faulty vein or perforator through minute punctures that require no stitches and leave no scars, according to Dr. Navarro. A patient who opts for a mini-phlebectomy can walk out of the office and return to normal activities immediately after the procedure. Mini-phlebectomy is often performed in conjunction with EVLT and other techniques, he says.

Hands Up!

Recent media reports have brides to be spending thousands of dollars on hand lifts so that their right hand dazzles as much as their engagement dazzler.

But for many, these treatments are just a Band-Aid, says Dr. Navarro. “Treating bulging veins in the hand will actually do more for a youthful hand appearance than any other hand



Women are much more likely to develop and seek treatment for problem veins, but that's not to say that men aren't also candidates. "When men come in to see us, usually the disease is very advanced and their veins are really bulging and have become problematic," Dr. Navarro says. "One in two or three men we see will be candidates for EVLT or phlebectomy."

"Blue veins can be injected with a sclerotherapy solution," Dr. Navarro says. "For tiny red veins in the face, I also do injections, but if the veins are too tiny for the needle, I use the VBeam laser," he explains.

"If you are trying to reduce the appearance of veins on your hands or face, see a vein specialist before opting for sclerotherapy injections," he warns, as this is a complex procedure for a novice to get right.

Choosing Wisely

Dr. Navarro cautions that many unskilled or unqualified doctors are trying to get in on the vein game. "Vein centers are popping up all over the place," he says. "More than 50% of people who come to me see are told by other doctors that they need a major procedure, when there are better, less invasive options available," he says.

Do your homework. "Choose a doctor who only does veins and is a qualified vein specialist," he suggests. "Ask about their training, board certification, the number and type of procedures they are doing, and get a detailed look at what treatment looks like from consultation to ultrasound to treatment"

Ask around. "Word of mouth will speak volumes when it comes to finding a skilled surgeon to treat problem veins," he says.

Dr. Navarro competed his general surgery training at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City before deciding to superspecialize in veins. Dr. Navarro has devoted his professional life to the development of treatments for venous disorders. Established in 1982, the Vein Treatment Center has been considered a leading medical facility that specializes exclusively in the treatment of varicose veins and spider veins. ❖

For further information: The Vein Treatment Center, 327 East 65th Street, New York City, Phone: 800-300-VEIN or 212-249-6117

procedure, which is why treating the veins in the hands has grown in popularity in recent years," he says. Dr. Navarro treats four to five patients with hand veins every day.

"As we age, we lose elasticity of the skin. Veins in the hands become visible, age spots appear, we lose subcutaneous tissue so the muscles become lax and the hand becomes bony," says Dr. Navarro. "Typically, we will need to treat the veins in the hands one to three times for long term clearance. When the veins are gone, brown spots can be removed with a laser, such as the Syneron-Candela VBeam pulse dye laser. If the hand is too bony, we can inject some fillers or growth factors as well. Ninety nine percent of my patients will just need to treat the veins, and given the improvement, nothing more is necessary."

About Face Veins

Problem veins also can appear on the face, he says. There are two types of veins in the face, explains Dr. Navarro. "We often see blue veins in the temple and cheeks, and tiny red veins are common in the cheeks, nose and chin," he says. Facial veins may also become more visible after a facelift. Treatment should be based on the type of vein as well as its location.