

Memphis Doctor Authors Groundbreaking PAD Study

By Aisling Maki

A Memphis physician has authored a national study centered on the cost and health outcomes for Medicare patients treated for peripheral artery disease (PAD).

It was published this month in the *Journal of Vascular and Interventional Radiology*. PAD, a common condition that affects about 10 million Americans aged 65 and older, is a narrowing of the blood vessels in the leg resulting from plaque build-up from high cholesterol and scar tissue. This narrowing limits the supply of oxygen and nutrients to the leg, causing pain, discomfort and an increased risk for heart attack and stroke.

Dr. Richard Duszak, an interventional radiologist and coding expert at Memphis-based Mid-South Imaging and Therapeutics, reported that Medicare patients treated for PAD experience significantly better outcomes when receiving treatment from interventional radiologists, as compared to patients who are treated by other professionals.

As compared with treatment performed by other professionals, Duszak's study showed solid evidence that PAD treatment provided by interventional radiologists results in lower risk of infection; less anesthesia; decreased use of intensive care; shorter hospital stays; fewer transfusions; repeat procedures and amputations; less pain and scarring; and a faster return to normal activities.

"The bottom line for the patient is one of choice," Duszak said. "If the first line of defense for PAD, which is lifestyle modification, is not enough, patients can talk to their doctors about a referral to an interventional radiologist or can call us or another practice directly."

Interventional radiologists pioneered the most successful minimally invasive procedures to treat PAD, which require only a small nick in the skin. Physicians use guided imagery to thread a thin tube through an artery in the groin to the blockage in the legs. A small balloon or a tiny mesh tube called a stent is then used to open the blocked artery.

In terms of the study's financial significance, claims data for 14,000 PAD patients showed that PAD procedures performed by interventional radiologists cost, on average, \$1,000 less

than those performed by other professionals, such as vascular surgeons and interventional cardiologists.

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–Dr. Richard Duszak

Interventional radiologist, Mid-South Imaging and Therapeutics

Treatments for PAD performed by interventional radiologists could potentially save taxpayers as much as \$230 million per year.

In addition to serving as an interventional radiologist at Mid-South Imaging and Therapeutics since 2007, Duszak is also associate editor of the Journal of the American College of Radiology and a member of the Executive Committee of the AMA’s CPT Editorial Panel.

Mid-South Imaging and Therapeutics, a hospital-based private group consisting of 32 radiologists working in seven subspecialty areas, has provided services for [Baptist Memorial Healthcare Corp.](#) and other service providers for more than four decades.

The organization also operates the Memphis Interventional Radiology Clinic, an outpatient-style clinic at [6025 Walnut Grove Road](#), where PAD treatment is among the specialized procedures performed.

Find the article at the following link:

<http://www.memphisdailynews.com/news/2012/jan/12/memphian-co-authors-groundbreaking-pad-study/>