

Varicose vein surgery in Greater Manchester

Background

Varicose veins are swollen veins in the legs. Some patients dislike the appearance of their varicose veins. They can cause symptoms, like itching and aching. They can also cause complications, such as ulcers. Varicose vein treatments are safe and effective. Treatments for varicose veins include endothermal ablation and foam sclerotherapy, which close the veins using heat or chemicals. Surgery to remove the veins can also be used. A commissioning statement is needed to make sure treatments are not offered for cosmetic reasons and to those who are unlikely to benefit.

What does the current commissioning statement say?

The current NHS Greater Manchester commissioning statement tells clinicians that surgery for varicose veins is allowed when patients have varicose vein complications: skin changes, an ulcer, bleeding, at risk of bleeding, or phlebitis. It does not say that surgery is allowed for patients who just have symptoms, like aching. The commissioning statement says that all patients referred for treatment should be assessed using an ultrasound scan and that they should be offered endothermal ablation first. Foam sclerotherapy should be offered if ablation is not suitable. Surgery should be offered if neither is suitable.

What evidence did we find?

There are several pieces of relevant guidance, including National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance published in 2013 and Evidence Based Interventions guidance, published in 2019 and updated in 2024. The guidance identified in our review said that patients with symptoms caused by varicose veins and/or complications should be offered intervention. The guidance also said that intervention should not be offered for cosmetic reasons. Patients should be assessed using ultrasound and should be offered endothermal ablation first. Foam sclerotherapy should be offered if ablation is not suitable. Surgery should be offered if neither is suitable.

Recommendations

The evidence supports changing the commissioning statement to allow treatment for patients with symptoms caused by varicose veins but no complications. It is recommended that the commissioning statement says that treatment for varicose veins is not commissioned for cosmetic reasons. It is recommended that the commissioning statement states that treatment must be offered to patients in the order recommended by the above guidance.

For your information, here is the link to the current Varicose vein surgery commissioning statement [GM Varicose Veins Commissioning Statement](#)