

Options for Careers in Vascular Surgery

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After training in vascular surgery, vascular surgeons can take care of a myriad of patient's problems with a wide array of treatment plans. The best thing about practicing as a vascular surgeon is that the patients come back to see the same physician over a long period of time, a lifetime actually, with the need for the surgeon to monitor their lifestyle as well as the results of any interventions they perform. I have patients now that come to see me in Baltimore that I actually first met and treated in Los Angeles years ago. It is a great feeling to see these patients over time and to get to know their families. I find that whatever is going on in their life involving medical issues of themselves or anyone in their family, my office will get a call for our advice and suggestion for referral. The level of trust that develops in these long term relationships with patients is fabulous for both the patient and the surgeon.

Patient treatment plans may be adapted to patients according to the severity of their illness, their age, and what they desire. Those with arterial disease can have their lifestyle modified to increase their exercise and can alter their risk factors which include their cholesterol, cessation from smoking, diet and medications. These patients may also be candidates for percutaneous procedures that are done as an outpatient and some may need a larger, more invasive procedure to revascularize their legs or fix their aneurysm. Patient with venous disease can be treated with support stockings and exercise or may need interventions such as sclerotherapy, venous ablation or venous stripping. Unusual patients may become part of the practice -- those with hypercoagulable states, thoracic outlet syndrome, lymphedema or arteriovenous malformations may seek a vascular surgeon's care because no one else knows the right plan of treatment. Therefore the variety is immense and challenging.

Vascular surgeons have numerous options besides clinical care. They can become experts in ultrasound and duplex scanning which are used to diagnose vascular disorders and follow outcomes in those patients who have been treated. A vascular surgeon can do clinical trials looking at outcomes with new devices and treatments and new medications. The vascular surgeon can do basic science or translational research in an academic setting as the cause of atherosclerosis and venous thrombosis are still not completely understood.

As a vascular surgeon, one can do all or some of these aforementioned activities and can change the focus and scope of their practice accordingly. Many vascular surgeon groups have a specialist in one area so that the patient gets up-to-date care. There are so many new things on the horizon; that is what makes being a vascular surgeon so exciting.

To learn more about your vascular health and find a vascular surgeon visit VascularWeb.org.