

New technique for treating blocked coronary arteries shows promise

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George W. Vetrovec, M.D., chair of cardiology at the Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center, known nationally for his study and treatment of coronary artery disease, says a new technique for treating blocked coronary arteries shows promise, but is best performed by experienced physicians.

The editorial review, *Improving Reperfusion in Patients with Myocardial Infarction*, appears in the current issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

A study – also published in the current issue – investigates a technique for treating patients suffering a myocardial infarction, or heart attack. The procedure, called a thrombectomy, uses a special aspiration catheter placed at the site of an arterial blockage, or clot, causing the heart attack. Doctors then suction out the thrombus, or blockage, and place a stent to prevent the area from becoming occluded again.

According to Vetrovec, the technique reduces the chance that pieces of the blockage could travel downstream and cause another obstruction – a potential consequence with traditional balloon angioplasty. Importantly, he adds, beyond the improvement of perfusion, or blood flow restoration, is the fact that clinical outcomes were improved and the improvements correlated with the improved markers of perfusion.

Vetrovec is world-renowned for his studies on coronary artery disease. In 1997, he received the Golden Heart Award from the American Heart

Association.

Vetrovec currently serves as a consultant to the FDA New Cardiovascular Devices Panel. He is a fellow in the American College of Cardiology, and has served as chairman of the governor's Physician Workforce Advisory Committee and is currently on the Board of Trustees. Vetrovec also is a fellow and a past president of the Society for the Cardiac Angiography and Interventions and is immediate past-president of the Association of Professors of Cardiology, an organization of his peers in academic cardiology. In addition, he is a member of the Association of University Cardiologists.

The catheterization laboratory at VCU performs approximately 3,000 invasive procedures per year, including 800 angioplasties.

Source: Virginia Commonwealth University

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