

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

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INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGIST
THE VEIN DOCTORS



Please tell us about your practice and your interest in lymphedema

Our practice is predominantly a chronic venous insufficiency practice which centers on treatment of CVI, but we've found over the past several years that many patients who have CVI have lymphedema concurrently. When we realized these diseases coexist we were able to diagnose and treat each appropriately, because treatment is very different for CVI compared to lymphedema. Currently we see approximately 75 to 100 patients with chronic swelling.

That's a lot of lymphedema patients. Why do you think some vein physicians say they see very few patients with chronic swelling?

As with CVI, I think there's just not enough recognition of the disease. And even if lymphedema is recognized, many clinicians don't really know what to do about it, and don't know that there are effective treatments available. That's why I'm a strong proponent of more public education on both CVI and lymphedema.

What challenges do physicians face in helping patients manage their lymphedema?

I think the biggest challenge is finding a home-based solution that works for patients. Many of these patients don't have good mobility, they are often overweight and have a lot of co-morbidities such as respiratory or heart problems. This limits their ability to travel to a lymphedema treatment center for manual compression massage-type treatments. So home-based treatment significantly improves their compliance.

I'd advise my physician colleagues that pneumatic compression devices work very well for this when used appropriately. Patients generally are very compliant in using these devices because they can perform the therapy at home.

Why do you prescribe the Flexitouch® advanced pneumatic compression device for at-home therapy?

I really believe the technology of this pneumatic compression device is superior to any other product on the market. There's really nothing out there that compares to it and gives us the outcomes we need.

Tactile Medical's service component is also the best I've seen. This includes a full-service insurance approval department; we submit our clinical notes directly to them and they're able to get patients approved for the devices. This is very important, because one of the biggest challenges we face in finding a cost-effective lymphedema solution for our patients is getting insurance companies to make the devices available and affordable.

How do you assess patients for the Flexitouch device?

When patients come into our office for an evaluation and we diagnose lymphedema, we measure their extremities and truncal areas to accurately assess what type of device they need. Once we obtain this information we submit it to Tactile, which assists us in obtaining the device so the patient can begin their lymphedema treatment after we treat their CVI.

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Can you describe results you've seen when patients use Flexitouch?

We've seen many positive outcomes. The most common thing we hear from our patients is how tremendously improved their quality of life has become. They notice that their clothes fit them, their shoes fit them, and they're able to walk with much less pain and discomfort.

Patients also tell us how great it was to work with the people at Tactile Medical. This includes the people who contacted them on the phone regarding their insurance approvals and the trainers who came to their homes to show them how to set up and use the device.

Any final thoughts about working with Tactile Medical?

Working with Tactile has really helped our practice because, ultimately, it aids us in getting the best outcomes for our patients. At the end of the day, that's how we judge our success.