

Configuration of vascular services: a multiple methods research programme

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Vascular services deal with people who have circulation problems. These problems include varicose veins or poor circulation in the legs, bleeding from burst blood vessels and disease in the neck arteries that may cause strokes.

Services have changed in recent years owing to new treatment methods and increased specialisation. This has resulted in the need for reorganisation of services. Our research programme has studied the aspects of services that are important to patients, how they may be best organised to provide better outcomes and how the results of treatment can be assessed.

We have reviewed the published evidence to see how a difference in the way that services are organised can affect results. This shows that some centralisation of services is likely to produce better outcomes. However, we have carried out a study to measure the importance that people attach to the location of services and the method of treatment, which has shown that these are highly valued and may be important in planning services.

Information from patients and doctors relating to their experience of the conditions and treatments has been used to develop an electronic questionnaire (the electronic Personal Assessment Questionnaire – Vascular) to collect and record information to help doctors and patients decide on the best treatment and monitor the results. This has been tested in a sample of NHS patients using vascular services. An adapted version is being used to collect data relating to aneurysm screening.

Finally, we have used the information that is routinely collected about patients with vascular conditions to develop computer models of the effects of rearranging services. This helps predict the best way to organise services and the impact that this is likely to have on the kind of treatment used, the number of patients treated and the outcomes. The model is available online and is already being used to help inform local service reconfiguration.

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This report

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