

What's in a Name?

By Joseph Magnant, MD, FACS

spe·cial·ist

Pronunciation: /spesh-(ə-)ləst/

Function: noun

Date: 1855

1: one who specializes in a particular occupation, practice, or branch of learning

In this day of advances in medical treatments with improvement and refinement in technology, patients have unlimited access to health related information in print media, television networks and through the internet. Although the information that is there for the general public appears to be virtually unlimited, with access to educational and procedural videos, web lectures and galleries of pre and post procedure photos, patients often may find themselves lost in the maze of choices of providers. The question of who the best or most well trained physicians are for a facelift, bunion surgery, knee replacement or vein procedures has become a more challenging one as the lines have blurred a bit with physician groups expanding outside their areas of specialty training to increase revenue. In general, advancements in medical technology have resulted in a natural migration of physicians toward greater specialization within their areas of training to remain current in the most modern treatment technologies.

A Good Starting Point for Researching Specialty Providers

Online resources are available for patient educational materials as well as for the research of credentials and training background of potential medical providers. A good starting point when researching specialty providers is a review of their practice website and the depth of content, as well as the completeness of their training record. Try to determine what percentage of the practice is dedicated to their area of specialty training and whether this is what you are specifically interested in. Is the physician completely dedicated to the area you are interested in? Are they specifically trained in this area and what sort of documentation can they provide to document

their dedication and interest in quality of care and patient outcomes? Would you feel more comfortable having your procedure performed by a physician who spends only 5-10% of his time performing the procedure in question, or having it performed by one who performs the procedure 100% of the time?

Feel free to ask questions and expect open and clear answers regarding provider network status with insurance companies and whether your planned procedure will be considered medically necessary. Established patient references may be supportive, but HIPAA compliance regulations make obtaining personal references, other than written or video patient testimonials, difficult. Primary care physician references, even from physicians other than your own, such as your friends' primary care physician, may prove helpful in making the right decision, as physicians have a much broader exposure to patients with problems similar to yours.

Take Advantage of a Free In-Office Screening

One other and perhaps most important determining piece of homework is the free in-office screening. If the opportunity presents itself, take full advantage of it. At the very least, you will get the chance to "kick the tires" of the practice, meet the doctor and staff, gather information regarding the treatments they offer and any literature regarding the physician's training.



Check out the cleanliness of the facility and, at a minimum, leave with an overall impression of the office, whether positive, neutral or negative. Any other information you glean while at the screening regarding your specific condition and the treatment options available should be considered a bonus.

Determine if Veins are a Sideline Business or the Main Focus

Determine whether veins are a sideline business or the main focus of their attention and whether the physicians have specific training in the field of venous or vascular diseases. Ask yourself if anything seems out of place or "wrong with the

picture” and do not allow anyone to convince you of the need for a procedure in the absence of true symptoms, just because something might happen in the future. Listen to that little voice that often subconsciously guides your decisions.

Expect a High Level of Specialization

In summary, do your homework when choosing a medical specialist professional. Dedicate at least as much time to making this decision as you do when you make a major decision like an auto purchase. You should expect a high level of specialization and dedication, professionalism and personal care from your health care specialist and their staff. Their training credentials and practice focus should be readily available and transparent. Full financial disclosure and honest answers to your questions regarding network status with your provider should be offered upfront, either on the website or in the form of a printed financial disclosure policy of the practice. If you meet a roadblock when making these types of inquiries, consider this a red flag. If you have internet access the network status can also be easily verified on your carrier’s provider site.

Established Patient, Physician and Word of Mouth Referrals are a Powerful Tool

The last and probably most important piece of data which should be considered is established patient, physician and word of mouth referral. These are powerful tools and will provide you with an added measure of reassurance that you have made the correct decision. Our community is more interconnected than we appreciate and a single inquiry will often lead to a network of referral opinions and experiences. The answer to the question “What would you do if this were your mother or wife?” should be an easy one for your specialist to respond to while looking at you sincerely in the eyes, “The same thing as I am suggesting to you, under similar clinical circumstances.”

About Dr. Magnant

Dr. Joseph Magnant earned his Doctorate in Medicine and performed his General Surgery residency at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia. He completed his Vascular Surgery fellowship at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Hanover, New Hampshire and is certified by the American Board of Surgery in Vascular Surgery. He is an active member of the Society for Vascular Surgery, the American College of Phlebology, the Southern Association for Vascular Surgery and is also a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. He practiced arterial and venous vascular surgery as part of a large multi specialty group for 14 years after he completed his fellowship in vascular surgery. He decided to further focus and limit his practice to venous diseases in 2005 and opened the doors of Vein Specialists in June 2006. Inquiries should be directed to info@weknowveins.com, www.facebook.com/weknowveins, [twitter@docvein](https://twitter.com/docvein), or 239-694-8346.




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Joseph Magnant, MD, FACS
Vein Expert and Board Certified
Vascular Surgeon





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