

## Taking the leap

In 2006, Magnant left his familiar Georgia surroundings for the unknown terrain of Southwest Florida. His goal was to open a practice committed solely to the modern evaluation and treatment of lower extremity venous disorders. By that time, some vein treatments were taking place outside of the hospital atmosphere, but the treatment options for vein problems were limited and the area appeared to be ripe for a vascular surgeon dedicated to caring only for venous disorders. It was Magnant's intention to limit the focus of his practice to veins and only veins. It is his strong belief that physicians who focus on their area of specialty training are able to consistently deliver a higher quality of care and achieve higher patient satisfaction.

"It was difficult to make the initial decision to leave a successful arterial vascular surgery practice after 14 years and enter the unknown of a new medical community without a proven track record or knowledge of the referral patterns," he notes. But he was committed to making his practice a success through physician and general public outreach and education. "Switching from focusing on arteries to strictly veins was a big adjustment for me," he explains. "But I felt strongly that there were patients out there who needed a dedicated vein expert."

Magnant chose to move his family and medical career to Fort Myers for a variety of professional and personal reasons including the fact that his parents were Fort Myers residents who he had visited for the holidays for the prior six years. He also could not deny that the area's climate and culture were added incentives. Magnant was not alone in his quest. J.T. Jarrard, a registered vascular technologist, followed him to Florida. "J.T. is passionate about his work," says Magnant. "He is an integral part of the practice." As a skilled sonographer, Jarrard has the ability to find the source of a problem and has enabled Magnant to offer many "hopeless" vein patients a definitive therapy. "We don't leave a stone unturned." With the key players in place, Magnant now faced his biggest challenge: convincing area physicians to give him a chance at earning their referrals and encouraging them to refer their venous insufficiency patients to his practice, Vein Specialists at Royal Palm Square. He often began each morning or spent his lunch hour visiting physicians' offices with goodies for the staff to feast on while presenting his power point slide presentation on the Modern Evaluation and Treatment of Venous Disease.

"It was a weird feeling," he confesses. "There I was, one minute the big arterial vascular surgeon metering out my time to the drug reps, and in the seeming blink of an eye I was on the other side, hoping to catch the referring physician for just a few minutes to make an introduction. It was a humbling experience, but was invaluable as I had the opportunity to meet many of the area's primary care physicians in the first six months and thereafter the patient referrals followed."

Magnant's outreach continued outside of the normal work week as well. He attended health fairs in an effort to reach the public, briefly screening them at the event and providing his educational DVD and trifolds. He would also open his practice periodically on a Saturday morning and offer free vein seminars and screenings. He developed a strong internet effort as well with his website [weknowveins.com](http://weknowveins.com) and it's in depth educational sections imparting information on symptoms, conditions, and treatments. But mostly he relied on word-of-mouth. Those he engaged at the health fairs and those who came on Saturday mornings would invariably tell their friends and the practice began to quickly grow. Physicians who were willing to have an open mind and believe that something new existed to help their patients, took a chance and sent their patients with vein problems to Magnant.

Today, Magnant says about 40 percent of his patients are referred from primary care and other specialty physicians, approximately 50 percent from word of mouth and personal referrals, and the remainder are from other educational and outreach efforts. A wide variety of physicians refer to his practice including orthopedic surgeons, cardiologists, wound care specialists, podiatrists, chiropractors as well as family physicians and internists. "The assumption sometimes is that this is a cosmetic practice, but that is not the case," Magnant says. "These are real medical problems and often are considered covered medical services. Ninety-five percent of patients have something we can help them with."

## A warm environment

Magnant took great care in creating an office focused on the comfort of his patients. "I wanted to create a patient-centered practice," he explains. "I want to make our patients feel like they were at home."

To accomplish this, he furnished the waiting area with current periodicals, freshly ground and brewed coffee, and a selection of Otis Spunkmeyer cookies. Rather than adorning the walls with dated Norman Rockwell prints, he has works from a variety of artists, several of whom are local. He finished his decorating effort by scattering photos of himself and his family previous patients, recent newspaper articles, memorabilia from his previous practice throughout his waiting and exam rooms. Patients have the opportunity to review his training pedigree while waiting as he has tastefully displayed his graduate training certificates on the wall adjacent to the complimentary recipe copying station.

They can take time to read a framed newspaper clipping highlighting his family for holding the record for the most number of siblings attending the Medical College of Virginia. "People enjoy it," he notes. "When they finally get to see me, those who have not yet met me know what to expect."

Aside from the inviting office atmosphere he has created for his patients, what really inspires him most are the countless positive written comments by his patients that describe their results, and underscore the professionalism of the entire team. One patient wrote, "After the procedure was completed I went to a clothing store with intentions of buying

shorter skirts and shorts to show off my new legs. When I turned to look in the mirror I wanted to cry with joy. For the first time in years I could try on clothes that showed my legs and not get depressed due to the ugly black spider veins!"

Just as important as his patient testimonials are the efforts he has put forth into hiring the right personnel, constantly on the lookout for those with just the right combination of professionalism and personality. And that does not just apply to those interacting with patients. It also goes for those behind the scenes, too, handling the business aspects of the practice. "I finally feel like I have the right combination of people."

## Increasing awareness

With the use of modern ultrasound equipment and the introduction of the endovenous closure technique, Magnant believes that the current technology for vein treatment is about as good as it is going to get for the foreseeable future. Veins that were not commonly identified or considered treatable before these new treatment and diagnostic capabilities were available, can now be safely and definitively treated with endovenous techniques. These advancements have improved his and his staff's understanding of other veins that have the potential to be abnormal and possibly warrant treatment. What does concern Magnant is the trend today of a variety of physicians entering the vein specialty because it is viewed as a less demanding and more lucrative specialty. Yes, he agrees there is a need for more vein experts, but it begs the question how will a patient know to whom they should go. He encourages patients to do their due diligence, check out the website, confer with their primary care physicians and with other patients who have had their treatments performed to see what their experience was like.

In the midst of all of the technology, however, Magnant's focus is on the proper care and treatment of his patients. Instead of primary care or other physicians feeling frustrated about their patients with swollen achy legs, discolored and thickened skin in the lower legs, or ulcers of the legs, or prescribing medication for their patients with restless leg syndrome or night cramps, they can refer their patients to Vein Specialists with the confidence that a scientific and thorough venous evaluation will be performed by Magnant and his professional staff and be sure that the results of the evaluation and recommendations will be clearly communicated. "We are asking for a chance to earn their [referring physician] referrals and respect," he says. "We just want a chance to take care of their patients." It has been 5 years since Magnant started his practice and thus far it appears that this dedicated approach to vein evaluation and treatment is working out well as his practice continued to grow and he has increased his staff from 3 to 10 over this period to maintain the high quality of patient care to which he is committed.