



Vinny could return to his bass and his band once his leg healed after treatment.

Bass player Vinny* was taken aback by the large pool of blood that had formed at his feet as he performed on stage with his band. Swiftly, he was whisked away from the platform to the emergency room.

"I was at a show in Lehigh for a charity event for the free health clinic," he explains. "I had my leg wrapped up because I had a big hole in my leg. I went on stage and, all of a sudden, I was standing in a puddle of blood and I was bleeding out. They rushed me to the hospital and I called my doctor."

Vinny had things other than his leg on his mind when he took to the stage that day. For the past ten years, he had been the primary caregiver to his wife, who had been waging an all-consuming battle against an insidious breast cancer. As his wife's fight grew fiercer, Vinny started to neglect the open wound on his leg, an injury he's had on and off for nearly five years.

"I was too worried about my wife and doing the gig to worry so much about my own health," says Vinny. "It's been about four or five years I've been fighting this. I have diabetes. I got a sore on my leg and it escalated. No matter what I did with it, it would always come back. The more I walked on it, the worse it would get."

Concerned, Vinny's physician began to suspect that there was more involved in Vinny's case than diabetes and referred Vinny to his colleague and friend, Joseph G. Magnant, MD, FACS, RPVI, a board-certified vascular surgeon who specializes in vein treatment. Dr. Magnant's practice, Vein Specialists, which has offices in Fort Myers and Bonita Springs, is dedicated to the modern evaluation and treatment of leg vein disorders. The vascular surgeon knew right away that Vinny's leg ulcer was the result of untreated vein disease, not diabetes.

"My veins were breaking down, and the condition got continually worse over the course of five years," states Vinny. "The end result was the whole side of my ankle blew out and blood was everywhere, and that's how [the bleeding episode] ended up happening. "I've been taking care of my wife, and that's why I got in such bad shape. Dr. Magnant didn't even know me, but after he heard my story, he was right on."

Dr. Magnant and the staff at Vein Specialists immediately impressed Vinny. They made him feel comfortable and put him at ease from the first appointment.

"Dr. Magnant picked up on my personality so quickly," notes Vinny. "Once you talk to him for five minutes, he just has a knack of talking to you in your language. He was talking to me like he's known me for twenty years the minute he met me."

Dr. Magnant performed an ultrasound examination and confirmed what he had already suspected: Vinny was suffering from venous insufficiency. The veins in his lower legs were not moving blood adequately.

"I had a problem where I couldn't heal because my veins weren't working right," Vinny describes. "I found out later that

More Than Skin Deep

Thick, discolored or inflamed skin and wounds that won't heal are visible signs of venous insufficiency.

he also took care of my mother, and my mother had the worst varicose veins I've ever seen in my life, so I get it from her."

A song and dance

In 1984, Jacquelyn "Jackie" Carpenter began a 14-year career at the local K-mart. The job was hard on her legs. Not only was she on her feet for long periods of time, but also her legs took the brunt of constant contact with the hand trucks and carts used to transport merchandise. Even in retirement, Jackie's favorite hobbies demand a lot of her legs.

"We dance," she shares. "We sing karaoke at the Moose and the Legion. We enjoy ourselves very much. We keep ourselves active."

A native of Massachusetts, Jackie has lived in Florida for 30 years. Yet her children remain in New England, so her mobility is also crucial to continue her trips north to visit her family.

"We go home and visit our kids," she relates. "One lives in Massachusetts, and the others live in New Hampshire."

With so much riding on her legs, Jackie became worried when they began to swell and ache. Her nephew recognized the signs of vein disease and suggested she visit the doctor who had taken such excellent care of him, Dr. Magnant.



For exercise, Jackie likes to ride her bike around her neighborhood.

Jackie first saw Dr. Magnant last year, when his examination and testing confirmed that she had venous insufficiency. However, family obligations made it impractical for her to have treatment at that time. But this year was different. She could finally address the problems with her legs, which had worsened. Now, the skin on her legs had also become discolored.

"They were swelling up and aching and everything," offers Jackie. "One of my legs turned a little brown. The left leg had more of a dark spot than the right leg. Once in a great while, it would be itchy."

The discoloration and itch were from the skin disorder *stasis dermatitis*, a result of the fluid and blood cells leaking out of the diseased veins into the skin and nearby tissues. Stasis dermatitis is a common symptom as well as a complication of venous insufficiency.



JOSEPH G. MAGNANT, MD, FACS, RPVI

When Jackie returned to Dr. Magnant's office, she was delighted with the good-hearted vascular surgeon.

"I really liked him when I first met him," she says. "That was a year ago, and I enjoyed him then, but I didn't get to go to him until this year. I thought he was very pleasant, and he makes you feel very important. He wants to take good care of you."

"He said my veins were leaking a little bit, and that's what was causing the legs to swell."

Dr. Magnant scheduled Jackie's surgeries, the right leg first and then the left shortly after. She was impressed with the surgeon's bedside manner during the procedures.

"He's very good with the patients while he's taking care of them," she reports. "He keeps you laughing, which keeps your mind off things – what's hurting or not hurting. He keeps your mind occupied. And he tells you to breathe in through your nose and breathe out through your mouth, and that helps. Believe me, it helps a lot."

The venous effect

Veins are blood vessels that are specially designed to pump blood back toward the heart, against the force of gravity. Inside the veins are a series of one-way valves that open and close with the rhythm of muscle contractions. Healthy valves close tightly, keeping blood moving upward toward the heart. With vein disease or *venous insufficiency*, the valves do not close properly, causing pooling of blood in the leg veins, which leads to myriad signs and symptoms.

"Venous insufficiency has many signs and symptoms," states Dr. Magnant, "and they go beyond the visible varicose veins. They include achy legs, swollen legs and skin discoloration and ulceration." One skin condition often associated with venous insufficiency is stasis dermatitis.

Stasis means pooling, static, not moving; *derma* means skin; and *itis* means inflammation. Stasis dermatitis is inflammation of the skin of the leg caused by blood pooling in the veins – in other words, by venous insufficiency.

"Stasis dermatitis is a condition where not only is fluid leaking out of the veins

because of the high venous pressure due to the leaking valves, but also red blood cells are leaking out of the veins into the skin and, in effect, causing discoloration or pigmentation," explains Dr. Magnant. "That's called *stasis pigmentation*."

With stasis pigmentation, the red blood cells, which contain pigment, leak out and break open, causing the discoloration. Then, the white blood cells leak out, and within the white cells are enzymes that are toxic to bacteria. But while the enzymes damage the bacterial walls, they also damage the skin, fat and other healthy tissues in the leg. When these enzymes leak out and open their cellular membranes, they release a toxic substance that bathes the fat cells and skin cells, leading to the symptoms of stasis dermatitis.



"This causes the skin to go from soft and pliable to thick and angry and inflamed, to red and hard and alligator-like," describes Dr. Magnant. "It creates the skin conditions in which a minor trauma will result in an ulcer, so if you get a bump or a cut, the cut becomes a venous ulcer. But it's the unhealthy skin that predisposes the patient to the ulceration. It's a continuum of disease, and the disease is venous insufficiency."

With these conditions, wound healing also becomes difficult. If the skin is unhealthy and thickened and there's added venous pressure and liquid leaking out of the veins, the wound is going to remain open. Oxygen cannot diffuse as well through fluid as it can through healthy tissue, so when there's extra fluid on the leg, oxygen diffusion is impaired. This distribution of oxygen across the wound is needed for healing.

"What also happens is that wounds can't contract," informs Dr. Magnant. "They can't close in because there's outward pressure from the extra fluid that's accumulating inside. Also, due to the venous insufficiency and the high venous pressure, there is the impaired oxygen diffusion."

"Those are the three reasons wound healing is affected: impaired oxygen diffusion because of extra water, the high venous pressure of the unhealthy skin related to the substances leaking out, and the extra fluid in the leg preventing or impairing the wound contraction capability. It can't close up."

Dr. Magnant points out that venous insufficiency is often not considered when patients see their providers about leg ulcers that won't heal. He adds that the medical community often ignores venous insufficiency until complications such as non-healing leg ulcers arise.

"Oftentimes, patients are told, *That's your diabetes*," notes Dr. Magnant. "That

doesn't sound right and it's not right. Diabetes doesn't cause that. People with diabetes have venous insufficiency, though. Probably one out of three people with diabetes has venous insufficiency."

"We need to start considering venous disease as the medical disease that it is rather than something that should be managed expectantly until complications occur and then react to them. We need to be proactive and investigate at least to see if there's something that is severe enough to treat and is fixable."

Healing hands

For Vinny and Jackie, Dr. Magnant represents a healing hand.

"He really saved my life," says Vinny. "He saved my leg. He saved my soul a little bit."

"I got a brand-new leg," he adds. "I had a problem with scratching in the middle of the night, which is because it was dry from the dermatitis. If I had done that before, I would have been in the hospital. I finally got it under control. Even with me damaging my leg again – *again* – it's completely healed."

Healing is just beginning for Jackie, but she's pleased with the procedures and the progress she's already made.

"So far, it's feeling good," she reports, "and that means a lot to me."

Jackie has some advice for others who have discolored, rough or itchy spots on their skin or other symptoms of stasis dermatitis or venous insufficiency.

"People should not let it go for a long time because treatment might not take care of all the color, but if it's done soon enough, then it does get better," she remarks. "I think Dr. Magnant is very good at what he does. If someone's having that kind of trouble, he's the one that they should go to talk to and see what the problem is."

Vinny is also pleased with the results of his treatment.

"He did a wonderful job because I'm able to heal now," he relates. "Once he fixed my leg, I was like, *Wow! I forgot what it was like to be normal!* I got so used to dealing with it. Now, I'm on the move. I've got energy. I've got the strength back in my leg."

Vinny is so thrilled with everything Dr. Magnant has done for him. The doctor even sponsored his band at a recent event in Lehigh. Vinny made sure Dr. Magnant was recognized with a sponsor sign prominently placed on the main stage.

"The sign said, *Dr. Magnant, Vein Specialists, Sponsored with my band's name. So my band played for free for him. We played for free, and underneath in parentheses, it said, 'Saved Vinny's Leg.'*"

PHON—Patti DiPanfilo

**The patient's name was withheld as his request to protect his privacy.*

Get started today and scan the QR code.



Jackie is still healing from her procedures, but she is pleased with the progress she's made so far.



Joseph G. Magnant, MD, FACS, RPVI, is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and is board certified by the American Board of Surgery in vascular surgery. He earned his medical degree from Medical College of Virginia. He completed a general surgery residency at Medical College of Virginia Hospitals and a fellowship in vascular surgery at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, NH. Dr. Magnant of Vein Specialists focuses exclusively on vein evaluation and modern treatments in a dedicated, outpatient, vein-centered facility. Dr. Magnant is an active member of the American College of Phlebology, Society for Vascular Surgery and Society of Vascular Ultrasound.

Layers of Human Skin



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Smooth out your problem veins

Dr. Magnant welcomes all calls regarding this article as well as other topics related to veins. His offices are located at **1510 Royal Palm Square Blvd., Suite 101**, in Fort Myers and at **3359 Woods Edge Circle, Suite 102**, in Bonita Springs. Please phone **(239) 694-VEIN (8346)** for more information or to schedule an appointment. Visit his website, weknowveins.com, or email him at info@weknowveins.com.

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