

# Southernex



Imaging Group Ltd

September 2003

## ANGIOPLASTY AND OR STENT INSERTION

### Patient Information

#### What is an angioplasty?

An angioplasty procedure is performed in conjunction with diagnostic angiography. There is a patient education pamphlet on diagnostic angiography, which you should read in conjunction with this pamphlet.

Angioplasty is a medical procedure that uses a tiny balloon to stretch open narrowed or blocked arteries or veins. Re-opening the artery or vein results in improved flow of blood and should relieve the symptoms caused by the blockage.

#### What is a stent?

Stents used in arteries or veins are metal devices which are inserted to hold the narrowed area wide open. It is similar to placing a sleeve inside a narrowed waterpipe.

These devices are used when stretching the artery or vein with a balloon (angioplasty only) will be inadequate to keep the blood vessel open. In these cases, the blood vessel narrows again after the balloon is deflated.

Stents are made of various types of metals similar to a fine wire mesh. They are very compact prior to placement which means they can go through the same tiny puncture hole that is used for the angiogram and angioplasty. When they are in the correct position, they are expanded to form a cylinder the same size as the blood vessel to hold it open.

#### What happens before an angioplasty (and/or stent insertion)?

The preparation steps are very similar to an angiogram. You will be given instructions regarding the time of your appointment and any necessary preparation. Don't eat for 6 hours prior to your appointment but you may have sips of water. Take all your usual medications unless you have been instructed not to by us or your referring doctor.

Please notify us if you are taking aspirin, heparin, warfarin, Coumadin or Marevan. You will have been asked if you have any allergy to x-ray dye, or if you have kidney (renal) impairment or diabetes – it is important that we know all these things.



Upon admission you will be allocated a bed and prepared for your procedure which will be performed in the Radiology Department. You will be changed into a hospital gown. A nurse will shave your groin. A tiny needle will be placed (in your arm vein). This intravenous line allows us to give you fluids or medicine which you may need during the procedure.

Intravenous antibiotics may be given prior to your procedure.

### **What happens during Angioplasty (and/or stent insertion)?**

If you are anxious, or if the procedure is going to take a long time, intravenous sedation can be given. During the procedure a diagnostic angiogram will be performed first to define any areas of blockage and determine whether they can be successfully treated.

The angioplasty procedure begins in the same way as an angiography procedure. You lie on an x-ray bed in the angiography room, your groin region is cleaned with antiseptic solution and sterile sheets placed over your body. You will receive a tiny injection of local anaesthetic into the skin of the groin. This has similar discomfort to a blood test and after this the whole area will be numb so you don't experience pain during the procedure. The balloon used for the procedure is very small when it is deflated and it is attached to a plastic tube (a catheter).

This catheter and balloon simply go through the puncture site in the groin, so you don't feel the balloon being placed inside the blood vessel. Various techniques are used to place the balloon in the correct position. It is then inflated while the radiologist watches the procedure on the television screen. During balloon inflation, you may feel minor discomfort which is due to the stretching open of the narrow area. If a stent has to be placed, it is put in at this stage. The stent is very small, just like the balloon, so it also goes through the puncture site without your feeling it. It is placed in the correct position and expanded so as to hold the artery or vein wide open. Sometimes more than one area has to be treated so the procedure will be repeated until all areas are wide open and there is good blood flow through the previously narrowed areas.

### **What are the risks?**

Angioplasty is a very safe procedure, but as with all medical procedures, it carries some risk. The major risks with balloon angioplasty are: bursting the blood vessel (rupture), blockage of the blood vessel, or blockages further along the artery, because material has been dislodged at the time of the procedure and floated down and blocked smaller arteries.

The chance of any of these complications occurring is very small and naturally, all efforts are made to avoid them.

Not only are they rare, but in many cases there are corrective treatments which can be performed at the time of the procedure through the existing groin puncture. Other complications include damage to the artery at the site of catheter insertion in the groin, damage to any blood vessels that the catheter has to be steered through or reaction to the x-ray dye. There are treatments for all of these problems.

Stent insertion carries similar risks. It has the additional problem that the stents can end up in the wrong position which may necessitate their removal or additional stents being placed.

### **What happens after the angioplasty?**

When the angioplasty (stent insertion) is completed, the catheter is removed and pressure applied to the site where it was inserted, to prevent swelling.

You will be moved back on to your bed and asked to stay lying down for some hours. The duration depends on the type of procedure.

Your blood pressure, pulse and catheter site will be checked frequently. You will be given food and drinks after the procedure.

Most people have to stay in hospital for a short time after the procedure; some people will be allowed to leave hospital on the same day, it depends on the procedure. When you leave hospital, you will be given instructions as to the level of activity that is appropriate.

### **Will the Angioplasty (Stent Insertion) relieve my symptoms forever?**

The above procedures fix most people. Rarely, the procedure will not get rid of your symptoms. If the procedure works as expected, most people get a good long term result.

Symptoms can return if the blood vessel re-narrows at the site of angioplasty (or stent insertion), or the blood vessel narrows somewhere else. If this happens, a repeat procedure is usually very straightforward and typically gets a good response.

If you experience any bleeding or other problems after the procedure, phone us on 3371 9588 between 8.00am and 6.00pm or at night on our after hours number 3839 2288.