

# Southernex



Imaging Group Ltd

September 2003

## **APHERESIS CATHETER (VAS-CATH) INSERTION**

### Patient Information

Your doctor has asked for a special tube, called an apheresis catheter, to be inserted. We would like to make your visit to us as easy and comfortable as possible – this brochure gives some information to help prepare you for your procedure.

#### **What is an Apheresis catheter (also known as a Vas-cath)?**

An apheresis catheter is a special type of tube placed into a vein. It is like a larger version of an intravenous drip. It is usually placed into a vein just above the collarbone then threaded down the vein until the tip is behind the breastbone. This is because the veins behind the breastbone are very large and easily accommodate the tube. The tube has a larger diameter than a normal intravenous drip, so as to allow satisfactory blood flow through the machine at the time of apheresis.

#### **What happens before the procedure?**

You will be given instructions regarding the time of your appointment and any necessary preparations. Prior to your appointment, you should have a shower with the antiseptic wash which has been provided. You should not drive yourself – you will need someone to drive you home after the procedure.

You will be asked not to eat anything for 6 hours prior to the appointment although you may have sips of water.

You should take your usual medications with a small amount of water. Please notify us if you are taking aspirin, heparin, warfarin, Coumadin, or Marevan tablets. We will have checked your blood count with your referring doctor but feel free to notify us if you know that these counts (particularly your platelet count) are low. 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 and an intravenous line inserted.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

You will be taken to the radiology procedure room and asked to lie on an x-ray bed with equipment over it. This is used to check the position of the device during insertion, to ensure it is placed correctly. In addition, an ultrasound machine is used to allow ready access into the chosen vein. The combination of the ultrasound and x-ray machines makes the procedure very safe.

You will be given intravenous sedation medicine which will make you calm and relaxed during the procedure. The insertion site will be made numb by a tiny injection of local anaesthetic. The combination of intravenous sedation and local anaesthetic means that you will be calm and won't feel any pain.

The catheter is placed into the vein through a small nick in the skin then it is held in place with two stitches. Dressings will be applied.

## **What happens after the procedure?**

You will be transferred back to the day hospital where you need to stay for 1-2 hours. This is to let everything settle down and to limit the amount of bruising. You can eat and drink during this time. After this, someone can drive you home where you should relax until the next day. Sporting activities etc should be avoided for a time after the procedure – your particular circumstances can be discussed with Radiology or Wesley Clinic staff around the time of catheter insertion. The insertion area may ache after the local anaesthetic wears off. Panadol, Panadeine or Digesic should control the pain. Sometimes the dressings feel uncomfortable – phone Radiology or Wesley Clinic for advice. You will be given an instruction sheet on how to care for your apheresis catheter.

## **What are the risks?**

Placement of an apheresis catheter is a very safe procedure and no complications are expected. All medical procedures have associated risks, although the chance of something going wrong is very small, possibilities include infection, bleeding or bruising, or damage to any adjacent structures. In the long term, some catheters can get infected or may be associated with clots in the veins.

The procedure will be discussed again in person with you and if you have any questions, please feel free to ask the doctor or nursing staff. If you experience any problems after the procedure, contact us on 3371 9588 or after hours 3839 2288. Alternatively, you can contact The Wesley Clinic on 3335 1900.