

# Southernex



Imaging Group Ltd

September 2003

## **VENOUS PORT (PORTA-CATH) INSERTION**

### Patient Information

Your doctor has asked for a venous port (also known as a Porta-Cath) 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 a venous port (Porta-Cath)?**

A venous port is a special type of intravenous access, like a long term intravenous drip but fully implanted under the skin. When you need intravenous medicine, transfusions, therapy etc, it is ready to use. When it is not being used, you can ignore it.

The device consists of a small hollow chamber about the size of your thumb tip plus a fine plastic tube (known as a catheter) which is inserted into one of your veins. The chamber makes a small lump under your skin which is how the nurses find it when they need to give your treatment. At treatment time, the skin is carefully cleaned to avoid germs then a tiny needle placed through the skin and into the chamber. Injected fluid then runs from the chamber up the catheter and into the vein. After your treatment, the device is flushed to avoid blockage then you can forget about it until next time.

The catheter tip is positioned in the largest veins of your body, so the port is typically placed in the upper chest region.

#### **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 thorough shower with the antiseptic wash 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 to keep your mouth moist.

You should take your usual medications with a small amount of water.

Please notify us if you are taking aspirin, heparin, Coumadin, Marevan or warfarin tablets. We will have checked your blood counts with your referring doctor but feel free to notify us if you know that these counts (particularly your platelet count) are low.

After you arrive at the hospital, you will be changed into a hospital gown and an intravenous line inserted. Intravenous antibiotics are usually given prior to insertion of the venous port, so as to minimise the risk of infection.

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

You will be taken to the radiology procedure room and asked to lie on a bed which has x-ray equipment over it. This is used to monitor the position of the device during insertion. 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 two tiny injections of local anaesthetic. The combination of intravenous sedative medicine to calm you plus local anaesthetic to numb the area means that you won't worry during the procedure and you won't feel any pain.

The chamber (port) is placed under the skin in the upper chest region through a small incision. The incision is closed with stitches under the skin. The plastic tube (catheter) runs up under the skin to the access vein, which is usually just above the collarbone. At this site, there is a small incision with one stitch in it.

The catheter is then threaded down the vein and positioned with the tip behind the breast bone. You don't feel this because there are no nerves inside the vein.

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

You will need to rest in bed for around 2 hours after the procedure to minimise the risk of bleeding or bruising at the insertion site. You can eat and drink during this time. If your procedure is being performed as a day case, someone can then drive you home where you should relax until the next day. Sporting activities etc should be avoided for a time after the procedure to allow everything to settle down. Your particular circumstances will be discussed with Radiology or Wesley Clinic staff around the time of 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 receive a separate pamphlet regarding after care.

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

Placement of a venous port is a very safe procedure and no complications are expected. However every medical procedure has associated risks, possibilities include bleeding or bruising, damage to any adjacent structures and infection. 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.**

INCORPORATING SOUTHERN X-RAY CLINICS • CLARKE & ROBERTSON RADIOLOGY • THE WESLEY PET CENTRE