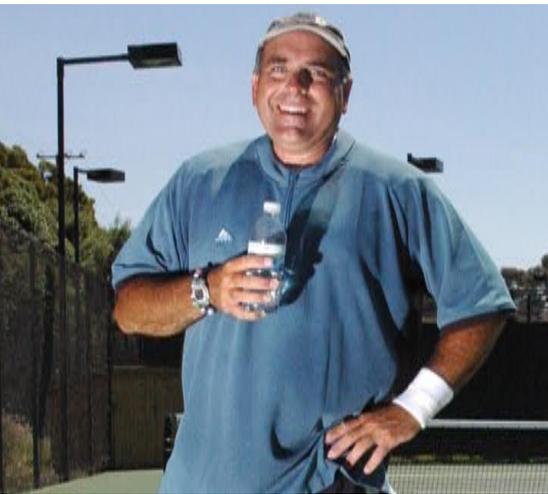


The Laser Advantage

Small Zap Equals More Zip



They would strike Brad McClain in the middle of the night, jolting him awake with little warning.

He would hop around near the bed to get his blood flowing or try to rub away the pain with his hands, anything to find relief from the cramps in his right leg.

McClain would eventually retreat to the recliner in the living room, elevate his feet and alternate ice and heat.

“It was like a fire drill trying to get the circulation flowing,” McClain said. “I tried everything to make it better, but nothing seemed to work for very long.”

McClain finally found a permanent solution for his pain and sleepless nights by undergoing endovenous laser ablation, a procedure performed to repair leaky valves in which a small

laser fiber is inserted into a damaged vein to seal it shut with heat energy.

Less invasive than surgery and with a lower complication rate, the laser treatment is well received by patients and gets them back on their feet faster.

McClain noticed an immediate improvement after having the procedure performed at Community Memorial Hospital in late December. The 44-year-old Ventura resident was able to lightly exercise within hours of being released.

“I used to have to drag my leg to get it going because it felt like it weighed a ton,” said McClain, who teaches tennis at Pierpont Racquet Club in Ventura and is a fly fishing guide in the Sierras. “Now it’s like my leg just wants to jump right out of the blocks and get going. There is a lot more zip.”

McClain suffered from varicose veins in his leg for years, but didn’t visit a doctor despite signs his condition was getting progressively worse.

The swelling would often become

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so bad his right leg would balloon to nearly 1/3 larger than his left, and minor bumps and bruises would take weeks to heal.

“I am not big on doctors and I tried to hold out as long as possible,” McClain said. “Someone smarter than me would have seen the problem sooner and dealt with it. But I kept putting it off.”

When McClain finally visited his primary physician, he realized the severity of his situation. The doctors recommended surgery, but McClain was a little apprehensive.

His father had also suffered from varicose veins, and endured a surgical procedure in which the veins are stripped. The method requires incisions being made in the patient, and having the damaged vein completely removed.

But technological advances paved the way for the laser option, which is

performed under local anesthesia.

“There is no question the laser treatment is extremely effective,” said Dr. Dominic Tedesco, the surgeon involved in McClain’s procedure. “In fact, most studies show close to 95 percent of the original patients treated with the laser have the vein closed long term, so there doesn’t seem to be any recurrence.”

Dr. Tedesco believes more people like McClain will benefit from the laser procedure once they realize its an option.

“Varicose veins are very common,” he said. “I would say about 25 percent of women have them and 15 percent of men. Brad’s were pretty extreme, but I think he let it go for such a long time it started causing him a lot of problems.” With his leg no longer swollen and painful, McClain is able to spend more time on the tennis court with his clients and with his 11-year-old son Brendan. He has started running again in the morning and taking more walks with his family.

“Now that it is healed you realize just how bad it had gotten,” McClain said. “I really should have had this done a year and a half ago because it would have saved me a lot of trouble.”

Along with the functional improvement in McClain’s leg, there has been a cosmetic improvement. People no longer stare at the large veins bulging from his skin when he wears tennis shorts.



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“After he had the surgery, we were on a walk and you could see his leg looked almost normal size,” McClain’s wife, Marion, said. “The difference aesthetically is just really amazing. I am really shocked at how well he responded to it.”

But McClain wasn’t immune from a little ribbing from his children about the compression stockings he had to wear and his slick legs.

“They got a big kick out of them shaving my legs for the surgery because I am a hairy guy,” McClain said. “I looked like a plucked chicken.”

But by far the biggest improvement in McClain’s life is his ability to sleep through the night without suffering from cramps. When he wakes up each

morning, his mind is sharper, his irritability is less and he is able to enjoy life.

“There is nothing like a good nights sleep,” McClain said. “It makes all the difference in the world.”



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