EECP, or Enhanced External Counterpulsation, is best known for helping patients with angina and failing hearts, but physicians now realize that the technique has wider applications. According to Carol Wilcock, RN, the CEO of Dynamic Health Technologies (a division of Universal Health Connection) in Helena, “EECP is a safe, non-invasive, FDA-approved outpatient treatment for those with ischemic heart disease, but it’s much more than that. It actually improves circulation in every part of the body.”

In EECP therapy, the patient lies on a padded table while three electrodes are applied to the chest and connected to an ECG (electrocardiograph) machine which displays the heart’s rhythm during treatment. Blood pressure and oxygen saturation are also monitored.

Inflatable cuffs are applied around the lower legs, upper legs, and hips. These cuffs continuously inflate and deflate, increasing the flow of blood to the heart, thus increasing the amount of oxygen that reaches damaged tissue. Patients experience a strong “hug” sensation that moves upward from the calves to the thighs to the buttocks during inflation, followed by the rapid release of pressure. Inflation and deflation are electronically synchronized with the patient’s heartbeat and blood pressure.

Developed in China half a century ago, external counterpulsation therapy is widely used in that country and around the world, but it is so new to the United States that only about 1200 EECP machines are in operation here. Dynamic Health Technologies’ EECP machine is the only one in Montana. Some of Dynamic Health Technologies’ clients were referred by the Mayo Clinic.

“EECP was originally designed to improve blood supply to the heart,” says Wilcock, “but it does the same for other organs, too. Patients came to clinics for treatment with heart problems but left without their diabetes, renal failure, erectile dysfunction, liver cirrhosis, or COPD symptoms. Published studies showing these results are available. If it’s a circulatory problem, EECP’s benefits are like three years of exercise in less than two months.”

Julian Whitaker, MD, the author of 13 best-selling books, including Reversing Heart Disease and Reversing Diabetes, and author of the widely read monthly newsletter Health & Healing, offers EECP to patients at his Whitaker Wellness Institute in Newport Beach, California. Dr. Whitaker prescribes EECP for angina, congestive heart failure, coronary artery blockages, diabetic neuropathy and other diabetic complications, erectile dysfunction, heart...
disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), kidney disease, memory disorders, Parkinson's disease, peripheral vascular disease, and vision problems. (See WhitakerWellness.com and DrWhitaker.com for details.)

In December 2012, the medical journal *Applied Physiology Nutrition and Metabolism* published a study titled, “Anti-inflammatory Effects of Enhanced External Counterpulsation in Subjects with Abnormal Glucose Tolerance.” It described a randomized, controlled, open-label trial that evaluated the effects of EECP therapy on arterial function, fasting glucose, insulin concentrations, glucose tolerance, capillary density, and skeletal muscle protein expression in subjects with abnormal glucose tolerance.

The study showed that EECP therapy improved endothelial function thereby enhancing insulin utilization, as demonstrated by the decrease in homeostasis model assessment of insulin resistance, and the authors further demonstrated the possible mechanism of action of the effect of EECP in improving insulin resistance in diabetic patients. The same researchers conducted a study of EECP therapy on glycemic control for patients with symptomatic coronary arterial disease (CAD) and Type II Diabetes Mellitus, and reported at a Clinical Exercise and Physiology Association meeting in May 2011 that “EECP significantly reduced fasting glucose by 20%.”

“These studies from the University of Florida are the first to demonstrate that EECP therapy is effective in improving peripheral artery function, glucose tolerance, and glycemic control, and therefore has great potential in the prevention and treatment of diabetes,” says Dr. Jun Ma, President and CEO of Vasomedical, which manufactures EECP devices. “We congratulate the researchers at University of Florida for the great work they have done and hope that, as more evidence and understanding become available, EECP therapy can become a treatment option for the tens of millions of diabetic and pre-diabetic patients.”

A study published in the medical journal *Urology International* in 1998 investigated the
effect of EECP in 13 patients with erectile dysfunction (ED). After receiving EECP for an hour per day for 20 days, all reported significant improvement which was verified by Doppler sonography. No adverse effects were observed.

A 2007 report in the International Journal of Clinical Practice examined the effect of EECP on medically refractory angina patients with erectile dysfunction. These patients had severe coronary disease and ED was only one of their symptoms. After 35 hours of EECP, 89% experienced significant improvement in not only their heart function but their ED as well. The researchers concluded that “EECP therapy is associated with improvement in erectile function in men with refractory angina.”

Other research published in medical journals shows that EECP could improve long-term renal function in cardiac patients and that EECP is an effective procedure to augment renal excretory function in patients with cirrhosis of the liver.

A study of external counterpulsation on patients from seven university hospitals showed that the treatment was both effective and without the risk of serious side effects. To date, the only reported side effect from external counterpulsation is skin chaffing on the legs. As the study concluded, “Enhanced external counterpulsation reduces angina and extends time to exercise-induced ischemia in patients with symptomatic coronary artery disease. Treatment was relatively well tolerated and free of limiting side effects in most patients.”

EECP sessions typically last one hour and are given daily, five days a week for seven weeks. An alternative schedule completed in four weeks is available for out-of-town clients. In some cases, additional treatments may be needed.

“We at Dynamic Health Technologies think the world of EECP,” says Wilcock. “It’s incredibly exciting to work with people who have serious circulatory problems and who, without drugs or surgery, begin feeling better and having more stamina, all without the risk of adverse side effects. EECP is effective, safe, inexpensive, and convenient.”

Recommended reading: “Heal Your Heart with EECP: The Only Non-invasive Way to Overcome Heart Disease” by Debra Braverman, MD. For additional information about EECP, visit EECPTherapy.com.

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