

Venous Imaging and Venous Angioplasty in Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

There have been a lot of stories lately about Dr. Paulo Zamboni from Italy who thought that there might be a link between problems with veins that carry blood from the brain and multiple sclerosis (MS). This led to the hope that operating on the veins may help improve symptoms of MS.

Nova Scotia has a high rate of MS and many people are asking for the tests and treatments that Dr. Zamboni talks about. You cannot get these in Nova Scotia at this time. Some people have gone to places outside of Nova Scotia to get venous angioplasty.

In venous angioplasty, a small balloon is put inside the vein and expanded so the vein stretches and carries blood more easily. For some people, the MS symptoms got better and for others they did not improve. For most people, improvements did not last.

There is not enough scientific proof to support Dr. Zamboni's theory. Dr. Zamboni himself says there must be more research before venous angioplasty is used to treat MS. Nova Scotia has had a world class MS research program for 30 years. If and when there is scientific proof, doctors with the program are looking forward to taking part.

The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness has decided:

- Without good research to prove the link between vein problems and MS, and proof that venous angioplasty improves MS, none of the testing or treatment for the vein problem will be available in Nova Scotia for MS.
- When there is scientific support for Dr. Zamboni's early results, the Department of Health and Wellness will consider providing venous angioplasty testing and treatment.

Follow up for patients who have had venous angioplasty performed for MS:

- Regular follow up by the family doctor or specialist will stay the same as it has been.
- Complications that need urgent attention will be treated the same as for anyone who sees a doctor because of complications. Further venous angioplasty will not be part of the treatment.