Health Bulletin

Procedure For Removing Vein During Bypass Surgery Offers Many Patient Benefits

(NAPSA)—When Alfonso Torres learned he needed coronary artery bypass surgery, he was worried because he knew it would require two separate operations. Before the heart surgery, a healthy vein from his leg would be removed, or "harvested," for use as a graft to bypass the blocked arteries in his heart. Torres remembered the painful incision his brother endured on his leg when he underwent bypass surgery—an incision from his brother's knee to ankle, which caused years of pain and repeated hospital visits.

Torres, a 68-year-old Los Angeles resident, was relieved when his cardiac surgeon, Dr. Kwok Yun, Cardiothoracic Surgeon at Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center, told him about a minimally invasive technique to remove the vein called Endoscopic Vessel Harvesting (EVH).

"It was a relief to know I would not have the leg complications my brother experienced," said Torres. "Bypass surgery was serious enough without having to worry about my leg."

About 306,000 patients undergo coronary artery bypass surgery each year in the United States. To perform the EVH procedure, Dr. Yun uses a special medical instrument to make one small 2 centimeter incision and delicately remove the vein. A small 1-3 millimeter puncture may also be used to complete the vein removal.

There are many benefits of EVH compared to the traditional approach, known as "open vein harvesting." Open harvesting requires a long incision that may stretch from ankle to groin to remove the vein from the leg. Benefits of EVH include a smaller incision, less muscle and tissue damage, reduced surgical trauma, a lower rate of infections and less scarring.

The image on the left shows the incision from open vein harvesting, while the image on the right shows the incision from EVH.

A recent study published in *The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* by Dr. Yun compares EVH to the traditional method. Results showed EVH reduced leg-wound complications by 67 percent compared with open harvesting techniques. The study also found EVH was comparable to open harvesting in terms of the durability of the vein, known as "graft patency." This study was funded by Guidant Corporation, maker of the VASOVIEW® EVH System.

"EVH reduces the complications of vein harvesting for bypass surgery without compromising long-term vein patency," said Dr. Yun. "My patients are continually impressed with the minimal scarring and rapid healing process EVH offers."

"I was up on my feet and active in no time, because my leg didn't bother me at all. I was able to focus my energy on healing from the bypass surgery," Torres said.

For more information on Endoscopic Vessel Harvesting and the VASOVIEW EVH System, please visit www.guidant.com. For more patient stories, visit www.heartsurgery-usa.com.