DOCTOR

MARCO CARDONE, MD

The Complexities of Treating Lipedema

The problem of treating lipedema starts often with the treatment of lymphedema. I know from some statistics that maybe 15% of patients that go to specialized doctors who treat lymphedema, actually they suffer [from] lipedema.

Often lymphedema is also complicated by the accumulation of fat tissue, and also lipedema in the advanced stages is often complicated by lymphedema. So the realities often live together. We have, also, some cases that are clearly lipedema by the beginning of the clinical history.

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I know that maybe in the first stages, [many] of the doctors and of the health organizations recognize it only as an aesthetic problem. Maybe it is, but if we go in the advanced stages, I don’t think we can only speak of an aesthetic problem. We have pain, we have burdens, we have difficulties in movements. And as we apply on all the patients that come here in our hospital, the ICF (the International Certification of Function), we know better that [their] way of living is limited.
Lipedema Treatment

We are treating [in] a conservative way these patients, and we use a combined treatment that comprehends ultrasound cavitations, manual lymphatic drainage, shock waves, and mesotherapy. We have, until now, nice results for what concerns the reduction of circumference. But overall, the best result we get is the reduction of pain in these patients.

As we see also from [a] surgical point of view, they obtain good results, but also with surgical treatment, the results are not eternal. After some time we have recurrence of lipedema.

What we have surely is that there is an inflammatory part. Maybe that gives an answer for what concerns pain, for what concerns fragility of the vascular tissues, of the veins, of the capillaries, but why do we have [such an] inflammatory pattern?

The inflammatory pattern we have [is] also in white fat tissue, and we don’t have it normally in the brown tissue. It’s not easy to get an answer.

I think that if we understand better the causes of lipedema, we will be much more able to treat it. We are also conducting genetic studies on patients with lipedema. We have [a] good collaboration with a center here in Italy, Laboratorio di Genetica Medica by Dr. Bertelli, who is conducting for us studies about lymphedema, primary lymphedemas. We are also trying to collect the genomes of patients affected by lipedema, and trying to get some idea of what kind of genes are implicated in this condition.
About Marco Cardone, MD

Dr. Marco Cardone is a physician in the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at San Giovanni Battista Hospital in Rome, Italy who specializes in lymphedema and lymphatic disorders.

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