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Stockings don't prevent post-stroke DVT

by Michael Woodhead

High-length graduated compression stockings do not prevent proximal DVT after stroke and should not be used, a major study published in the *Lancet* today suggests.

Stroke specialists say [clinical guidelines](#) will need to be changed to reflect the findings of the [multi-national study](#) that included stroke patients from Australian centres.

In the prospective trial of more than 2500 patients, the rate of symptomatic or asymptomatic DVT in the popliteal or femoral veins was the same - around 10% - for patients randomised to either compression stockings or control group.

In addition, adverse effects such as skin breaks, ulcers, blisters, and skin necrosis were significantly more common in patients allocated to compression stockings.

"This trial provides no evidence to support the routine use of graduated compression stocking in immobile, hospitalised patients with acute stroke. National stroke guidelines that recommend their use might now need to be updated as a result of this new evidence," the study authors conclude.

They say it is not clear why stockings prevent DVT in patients undergoing surgery but not after a stroke, though it might be because stroke patients only start treatment a few days after the onset of paralysis and immobility.

And while proper sizing, fitting, and compliance with stockings are important, they did not seem to be factors in this trial, they note.

[Speaking to the ABC today](#), study co-author Professor Graeme Hankey, from the Royal perth Hospital said: "We need to revise guidelines and stop using them (post-stroke)...there's a small amount of harm...and they're costly and uncomfortable."

28 May 2009

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