

Angioplasty Alternatives

Haven Daley:

Richard Schielke came to the emergency room with chest pain.

Richard Schielke:

My arm was going numb, so I did a, um, a stress test, and they found that my, um, blood vessels were blocked.

Haven Daley:

A new study suggests that drugs may be a better answer to Schielke's problem instead of angioplasty. About 1.2 million angioplasties are done in the U.S. each year. Through a blood vessel in the groin, doctors snake a tube to a blocked heart artery. A tiny balloon is inflated to flatten the clog, and a mesh stent is usually placed inside.

Haven Daley:

The study, to be published in April in The New England Journal of Medicine, found the commonly used procedure did not help non-emergency heart patients.

Michael Crawford:

The main results of the study were that the addition of angioplasty did not prevent the primary outcome, which was death and heart attack.

Haven Daley:

Angioplasty remains the top treatment for people having a heart attack, but most angioplasties are done on a non-emergency basis to relieve chest pain. Experts say those patients should now try drugs first, along with an overall healthy lifestyle.

Michael Crawford:

Very aggressive control of cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, uh, diet, exercise, uh, weight control...

Haven Daley:

The new study could result in health care savings for patients. Angioplasties cost about thirty to forty thousand dollars. Schielke says he's going to use a much cheaper method to help improve his heart health.

Richard Schielke:

Exercise a lot and, um, eat as good as you can.

Haven Daley:

Haven Daley, The Associated Press, San Francisco.

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