



LIVING

Back in the GAME

By Deborah Petticord
Photography courtesy of
Vein Therapies of Chattanooga

**IMPROVED PATENTED TECHNOLOGY OFFERS A SIMPLE,
LESS INVASIVE ALTERNATIVE
FOR VARICOSE VEIN SUFFERERS**

THE TINY IMAGE OF A VEIN APPEARS ON THE SCREEN OF THE APPLE LAPTOP. ITS VALVE IS RHYTHMICALLY OPENING, YET NOT QUITE CLOSING, AS THE 48-YEAR-OLD PATIENT WATCHES CURIOUSLY. WHEN THE VALVE FAILS TO CLOSE, BLOOD SLOSHES BACK DOWN INTO THE LOWER VEIN INTO WHAT LOOKS LIKE A FLATTENED BUBBLE.

"Blood should be pumped back up the legs, but when the valves aren't working the blood pools and the legs feel heavy," says former cardiac surgeon Dr. Griffin Coates, founder of Vein Therapies of Chattanooga. Coates, himself a patient of the VNUS Closure® procedure is one of its strongest proponents.

"I thought I was in touch with my body. But I didn't realize how vein disease sneaks up on you. Leaky valves undermine the quality of the vein." Just over three years ago Dr. Coates began experiencing the symptoms of vein disease as he pursued his favorite activities—tennis and running. The heaviness and discomfort he felt in his legs was discouraging.

"At first I thought I was just out of shape." As it became apparent that his veins were diseased he still tried to avoid the procedure that was typical at the time. He had seen and performed many varicose vein procedures the old way in preparation for cardiac surgery. Coates even assisted in the 700th heart transplant at the University of Arizona Medical Center while he was there in 2005.

Old methods of dealing with varicose veins included a painful vein-stripping surgery with a long recovery time

and he didn't want to have that done. Incisions had to be made in the groin and a tool was used to pull the vein out of the leg. "It was barbaric," says Coates. In fact most people, 70 percent of them were women, put it off as long as possible.

The venous system is made up of a network including the superficial veins located close to the surface of the skin, the deep veins that are larger and located deeper in the leg and the perforator veins that connect the superficial veins to the deep veins. Valves regulating blood flow in these veins often become compromised due to heredity factors, a standing profession, obesity, multiple pregnancies or a change in hormones. The VNUS Closure® procedure treats the venous reflux disease in the superficial vein system—most often the underlying cause of painful varicose veins. A disposable catheter powered by radio frequency is inserted into the vein through a tiny incision in the leg. It is then warmed and as the vein collapses the catheter is withdrawn. The vein wall shrinks and the vein is sealed shut. Once the vein is closed the body re-routes the blood to other healthy veins. Although laser technology is frequently used, Coates says the laser



**The VNUS Closure® is an
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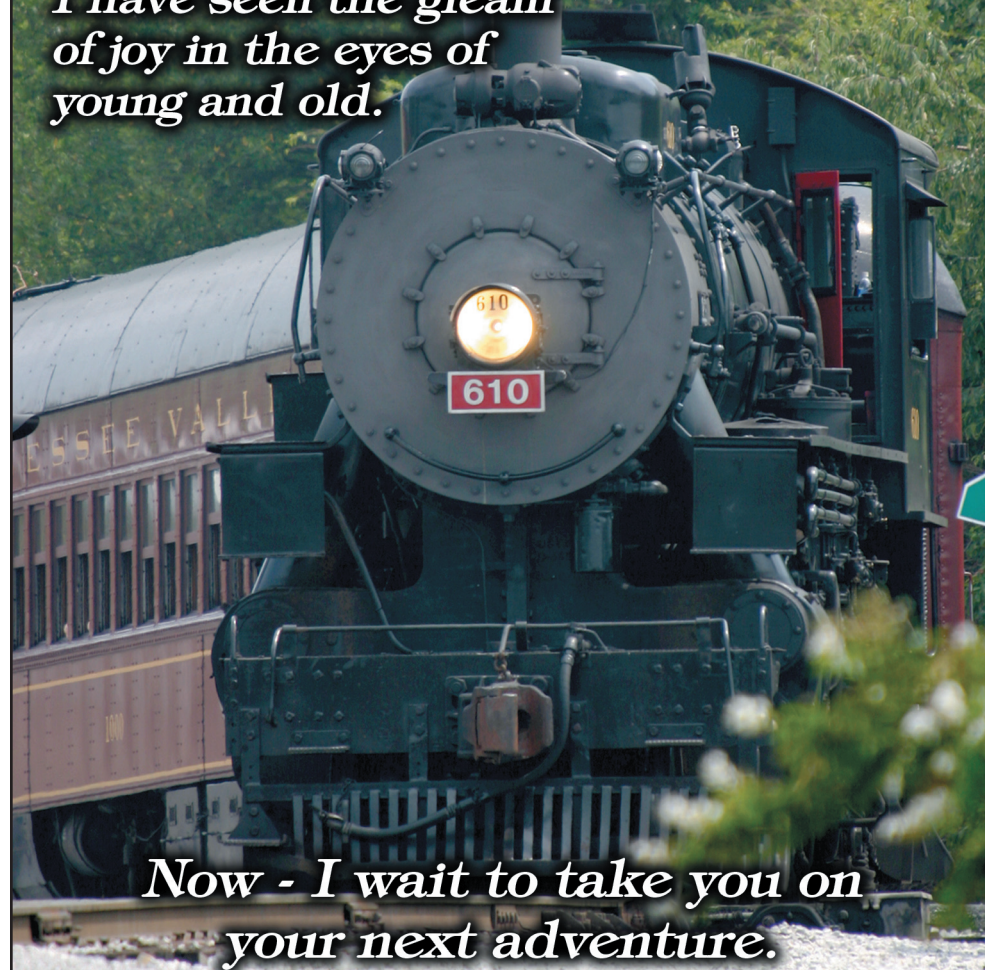
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BACK IN THE GAME CONTINUED

is too hot and may often cause holes in the blood vessels and more pain due to bruising.

Dr. Coates heard about the VNUS Closure® procedure, which had only been used in France and Germany, when it was first introduced in the States. He traveled with his wife Andi, a registered nurse, up to Virginia to get a diagnosis.



Dr. Griffin Coates
and his wife Andi.

Dr. Coates spent a day observing Dr. David MacMillan in Blacksburg. He watched as several procedures were done. At the end of the day says MacMillan, "Dr. Coates said 'Would you like to take a look at my legs?' He had all these varicose veins, so we scheduled his surgery." Back in Chattanooga the day after surgery, Coates completed his hospital rounds and on the third day he performed a three-hour surgery. The relief Coates says, "was almost immediate." The office procedure requires only a local anesthesia, no heavy narcotics, and the patient is able to walk out about 30 minutes after treatment. After doing 700-800 VNUS Closure® surgeries Dr. MacMillan says, "The vast majority of patients are pleased with the results—they can't believe how much better their legs feel. They are wearing shorts for the first time in years." MacMillan adds that the procedure is approved by the American Medical Association and it represents a "huge amount of progress."

Jody Crigger of Speedwell, Virginia recently had Dr. MacMillan do the VNUS Closure® procedure.

The 50-year-old had suffered severe varicose veins and had an ulcer that wouldn't heal. Within three weeks after the surgery, the ulcer had healed. "It has made a big difference. It cut the pain completely," says Crigger.

"Having been in general surgery I had done only five procedures the old way, in 20 years. In the past four years I've done hundreds with the new procedure," adds MacMillan.

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—Dr. Griffin Coates**

"What makes it all possible is the improvement in ultrasound technology," says Dr. Coates. The scans are sent to the insurance companies. "They prefer it [VNUS Closure®] because there is less risk. No heavy narcotics; less missed work—two-three days compared to two-three weeks," he adds. Insurance companies require a second ultrasound scan two days after the VNUS Closure® procedure to check for blood clots.

Today's patient will undergo a prerequisite treatment of wearing compression stockings for two weeks before coming back to the comfortable office on Shallowford Road where the procedure will take place. The bright and spacious office has two examining rooms and two procedure rooms in the Corporate Image complex built by local developer Ken Defoor. Dr. Griffin Coates' Vein Therapies of Chattanooga is open for treatments to spider veins and other superficial vein problems.

See www.vnus.com for more information.

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