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Venoplasty as a key solution for improving dialysis access: a literature review



Ronald Winardi Kartika^{1,2*}, Robiyatun³, Nuly Juariah Mahnulia³,
Vika Wirdhani³, Iskandar³, Egi Wigia Kurniahayati³, Edi Supriadi³,
Sarwoko², Eka Dian², Florentina Endah²

ABSTRACT

Background: Chronic kidney disease necessitates effective dialysis, which relies heavily on the integrity and patency of vascular access. Venoplasty has emerged as a pivotal intervention for maintaining this access. This literature review aims to evaluate venoplasty as a key solution for improving dialysis access.

Methods: This literature review evaluates the mechanisms, indications, clinical outcomes, and procedural efficacy of venoplasty. A comprehensive literature search was conducted for randomized controlled trials and observational studies from the last decade, focusing on success rates, adverse events, and long-term patency.

Results: Venoplasty, utilizing balloon catheters to dilate stenosed veins, demonstrates a success rate of 70–90% in restoring blood flow. This significantly reduces dialysis-related complications and hospitalizations. However, the risk of re-stenosis persists, often necessitating repeat interventions or alternative strategies like stenting in recurrent cases.

Conclusion: Venoplasty remains a cornerstone for managing central venous obstruction in dialysis patients, significantly improving quality of life and reducing intervention frequency. As chronic kidney disease prevalence rises, integrating venoplasty into standard care is essential. Future research should prioritize advanced techniques, such as drug-coated balloons, to enhance durability and address current limitations in treating vascular access failure.

Keywords: Venoplasty, Vascular access, Hemodialysis, Venous stenosis, Patency.

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¹Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universitas Kristen Krida Wacana, Jakarta, Indonesia

²Education and Training Unit, Dr. Sitanala General Hospital, Tangerang, Indonesia

³Hemodialysis Unit, Dr. Sitanala General Hospital, Tangerang, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author:

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences,
Universitas Kristen Krida Wacana,
Jakarta, Indonesia;

ronald.kartika@ukrida.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Dialysis is an essential therapeutic intervention for patients with chronic kidney failure, as it functions to eliminate metabolic waste products and excess fluid from the body. The presence of adequate vascular access is a fundamental requirement for performing dialysis procedures. However, over time, vascular access can experience various complications, such as stenosis or thrombosis, which can impede blood flow and potentially disrupt the effectiveness of dialysis.¹

Venoplasty is an interventional medical procedure designed to rectify narrowing within a vein through dilation methods. By utilizing a catheter equipped with a balloon, venoplasty allows for the dilation of areas experiencing stenosis, thereby restoring adequate blood flow. This procedure serves not only as a

remedial measure but also as a preventive strategy aimed at reducing the risk of long-term complications that may arise from insufficient vascular access.²

Epidemiological data indicate that the increasing incidence and prevalence of chronic kidney disease necessitate a comprehensive approach to managing vascular access. With advancements in technology within the field of vascular intervention, venoplasty has become an integral component of care protocols for dialysis patients.³⁻¹⁰

This paper aims to examine the mechanisms, indications, and clinical outcomes of venoplasty in the context of dialysis access and to discuss the implications of improved vascular access on patients' quality of life. A deeper understanding of venoplasty is expected to enhance clinical practices in the management of patients requiring dialysis.

METHODS

A narrative literature review was conducted to explore the role of venoplasty in improving vascular access for dialysis patients. Relevant publications were identified through searches of major electronic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and the Cochrane Library. The search strategy incorporated combinations of keywords such as venoplasty, vascular access, dialysis access, stenting, and chronic kidney disease. The review focused on English-language studies involving human subjects and published within the past ten years. Priority was given to original research articles, including randomized controlled trials, cohort studies, and case-control studies that evaluated the effectiveness of venoplasty and reported clinically relevant outcomes such as procedural success, complications, access patency, and patient-related outcomes.

Studies that were not peer-reviewed, as well as case reports, review articles, meta-analyses, and publications addressing interventions unrelated to venoplasty or dialysis vascular access, were excluded. The selected literature was critically reviewed and synthesized to provide an overview of current evidence regarding the indications, mechanisms, clinical outcomes, and practical implications of venoplasty in the management of dialysis access.

Mechanisms of Venoplasty Venoplasty Procedure

The venoplasty procedure typically begins with the administration of a local anesthetic to ensure patient comfort. A percutaneous approach is then employed to access the target vein, often guided by ultrasound imaging to enhance precision during the process.

Once access is achieved, a thin catheter is carefully inserted into the vein, navigating past any areas of obstruction or stenosis. With the catheter in place, a balloon catheter is advanced through the first catheter. The balloon is inflated at the site of stenosis, typically for 2 to 5 minutes, applying radial pressure on the vessel wall to open the narrowed segment effectively.

After the dilation, the balloon is deflated, and blood flow is closely monitored. Imaging techniques may be utilized to assess the success of the dilation and determine if any additional interventions, such as stenting, are necessary to maintain vascular access.⁸

Equipment Used:

Specialized venoplasty catheters are integral to the procedure, often featuring dual lumens that facilitate simultaneous actions, such as blood withdrawal and infusions. These catheters are designed to optimize the efficiency and safety of vascular access.⁹

The balloon catheter used in venoplasty is specifically engineered for vascular dilation, available in various diameters and lengths to accommodate different vein sizes. This versatility ensures effective treatment tailored to the patient's unique anatomy.^{9,10} Additionally, ultrasound or fluoroscopy equipment plays a crucial role during the procedure, providing real-time guidance that ensures precise catheter

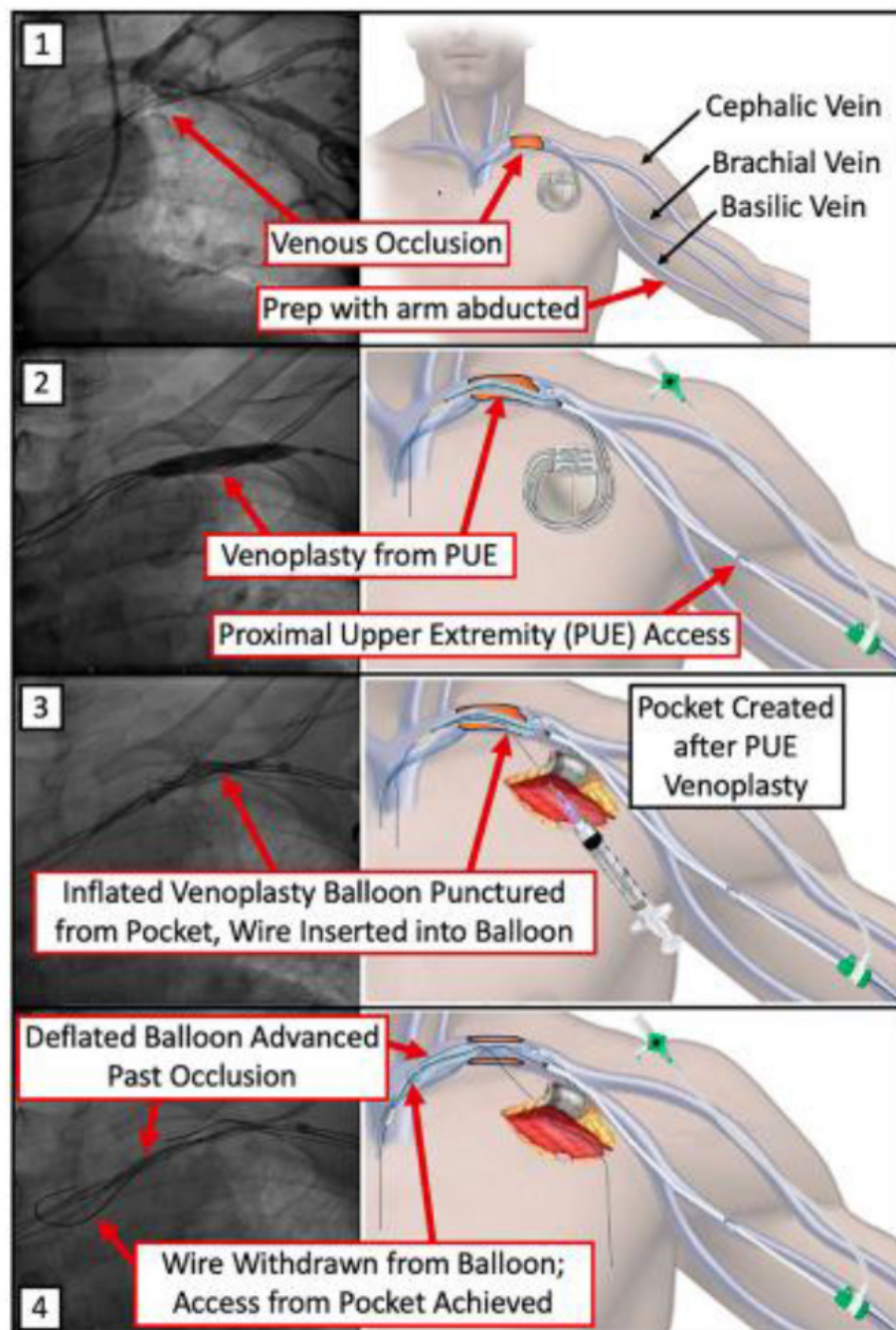


Figure 1. Venoplasty Step Procedure in Central Venous Stenosis.¹⁰

placement.¹⁰ This imaging technology allows for accurate assessment of blood flow and enhances the overall success of the venoplasty intervention (Figure 1).¹⁰

Physiological Effects of Vein Dilation

The physiological mechanisms of venoplasty, highlighting its significance in the management of vascular access for dialysis. Venoplasty primarily aims to restore adequate blood flow through the affected vein. By dilating the stenosed

segment, this procedure effectively reduces vascular resistance, leading to improved hemodynamics. Additionally, the dilation enhances the elasticity and compliance of the vein, allowing it to accommodate varying blood flow volumes better. This increased compliance subsequently lowers the risk of future thrombosis or restenosis.¹¹

Furthermore, by relieving constriction, venoplasty diminishes wall tension within the vein, helping to prevent potential

rupture or damage. Successful dilation also promotes a healing response in the endothelial lining, which further enhances the integrity and function of the vasculature over time. Ultimately, effective venoplasty can lead to sustained improvements in vascular access, reducing the necessity for repeat interventions and significantly enhancing the overall survival and quality of life for patients undergoing dialysis.^{12,13}

Indications and Contraindications

Venoplasty is commonly indicated for patients with significant stenosis in veins, particularly those utilized for dialysis access, as it plays a crucial role in restoring adequate blood flow. The procedure may also be necessary for individuals experiencing venous thrombosis, effectively reopening affected veins and improving access.¹⁴

Additionally, venoplasty is often performed to prolong the functionality of existing dialysis access points, especially in patients who have undergone multiple interventions. In some cases, it may be used as a preparatory step before surgically creating a fistula or graft, optimizing venous conditions for successful access.¹⁵

However, there are important contraindications to consider prior to the procedure. An active infection at the planned puncture site or within the bloodstream significantly raises the risk of complications, making venoplasty inadvisable. Severe peripheral vascular disease or other conditions that compromise vascular integrity can also render the procedure infeasible. Furthermore, patients with uncontrolled coagulopathy, or those on anticoagulant therapy that cannot be managed, face increased risks during the intervention. Lastly, patients must provide informed consent; thus, any refusal to undergo the procedure serves as a clear contraindication, regardless of clinical indications.¹⁶

Clinical Outcomes

Venoplasty has demonstrated impressive success rates in improving blood flow, particularly in patients with venous stenosis. Studies indicate that the procedure can achieve success rates of 70-90% in re-establishing adequate blood

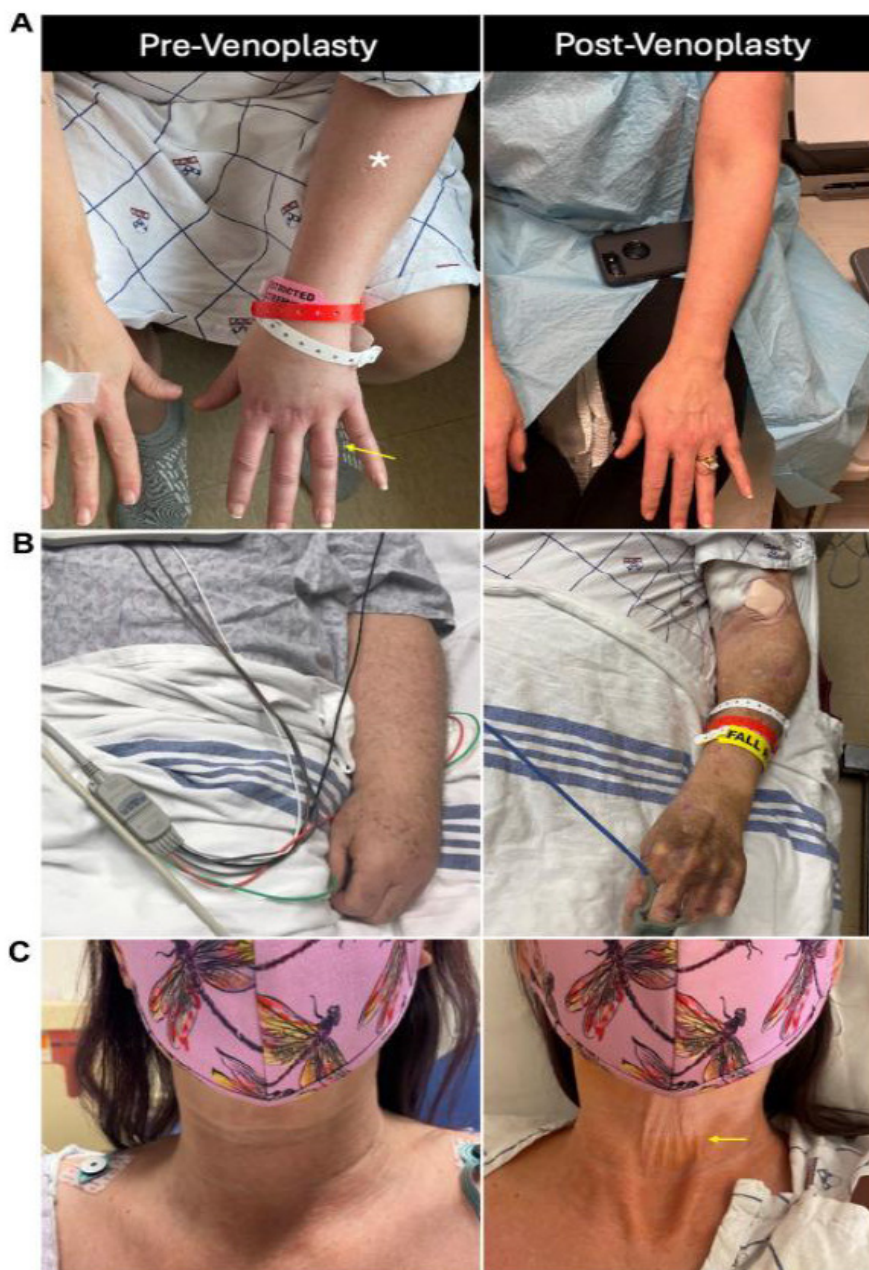


Figure 2. Percutaneous balloon venoplasty in Central Venous Stenosis.³

flow through the affected vessel, leading to enhanced dialysis access. This restoration of blood flow is crucial for maintaining effective and continuous dialysis therapy.¹⁷

However, like any medical procedure, venoplasty is not without potential complications. Post-procedure risks may include hematoma formation, infection at the site of access, re-stenosis, and, rarely, vascular rupture (**Figure 2**). These complications underscore the importance of careful patient selection and post-procedure monitoring to mitigate risks.¹⁸

The impact of venoplasty on patients' quality of life is significant. By restoring effective vascular access, the procedure can help reduce the frequency of dialysis-related complications and hospitalizations. Patients often report improved overall well-being, enhanced ability to manage their condition, and greater peace of mind knowing that their access is functioning properly. This improvement in quality of life is a critical consideration in evaluating the overall benefits of venoplasty in the context of dialysis access.¹⁹

Comparison with Other Methods

When considering vascular access techniques for dialysis, venoplasty can be contrasted with other methods such as stenting and bypass, each of which offers distinct advantages and disadvantages. Venoplasty primarily focuses on dilating the narrowed segment of a vein and has been shown to achieve success rates of 70-90% in restoring adequate blood flow. It is a minimally invasive procedure typically performed under local anesthesia, which results in a lower risk of complications associated with stents, such as migration or thrombosis. However, one of its drawbacks is the potential for re-stenosis over time, which may necessitate repeat interventions, particularly in veins with severe or long-standing disease.²⁰

In contrast, stenting involves placing a small mesh tube to maintain vessel patency after dilation. This method can provide longer-lasting support and reduce the chance of re-stenosis, making it suitable in situations where venoplasty may be less effective. However, stenting comes with its own risks, including stent-related complications and the requirement for careful patient selection.

Bypass surgery, another alternative, creates a new pathway for blood flow around an obstructed vein. While it offers a more permanent solution for patients with severe vascular disease, it is also the most invasive option, leading to longer recovery times and greater risks of complications such as infection or significant bleeding. In comparison, venoplasty is less invasive and often performed on an outpatient basis, making it a quicker option for patients.²¹

Ultimately, the choice of vascular access method, whether venoplasty, stenting, or bypass, depends on a variety of factors, including the specific vascular conditions present, the patient's overall health, and the urgency of the intervention. Each approach has its own place in clinical practice, and careful consideration is essential for optimizing patient outcomes.²²

DISCUSSION

The interpretation of findings across various studies strongly supports the procedural feasibility and initial efficacy of venoplasty in managing central venous

obstruction (CVO) for dialysis access. While venoplasty itself shows a respectable assisted primary patency rate, often above 77% at 12 months, comparative systematic reviews indicate that stenting may offer a superior *primary* patency rate in the first two years following the intervention for CVO.²³ This suggests that while venoplasty is effective immediately, the inherent elastic recoil in central veins, which is more pronounced in CVO compared to simple stenosis, often leads to re-narrowing.^{3,4} Furthermore, studies focusing solely on venoplasty show that maintaining access patency frequently necessitates multiple procedures, with an average interval to a second venoplasty sometimes as short as 7 months.²⁴

The clinical implications for medical practice are that venoplasty remains a cornerstone, low-risk initial treatment for dialysis access issues, especially for stenosis.^{5,6} However, the data suggest a shift in the management paradigm for more complex or recurrent issues. The superior short-term primary patency seen with stenting, coupled with low complication rates for both procedures, highlights a potential benefit for stenting as a first-line treatment in specific CVO scenarios.^{1,2} For patients with failing arteriovenous grafts due to stenosis at the anastomosis, covered stents have been shown to be significantly superior to angioplasty (venoplasty) alone in maintaining primary patency at 6 and 12 months.²⁵ This implies that the decision between venoplasty alone and stenting should be guided by the underlying pathology and the anticipated durability required.

Recommendations for future research should focus on addressing the noted limitations in current evidence, such as the overall poor quality of existing studies.²⁶ Randomized controlled trials are needed to definitively compare the long-term outcomes of venoplasty versus stenting, especially in the context of CVO (Catheter Venous Obstruction), where stenting currently shows a short-term advantage.^{27,28}

Furthermore, research should explore the role of adjuvant techniques, such as drug-coated balloons or stents, and the impact of patient-specific clinical factors, as some studies suggest that a history of

ipsilateral tunneled dialysis catheters may lead to less favorable outcomes following venoplasty. Clarifying these variables will allow clinicians to better stratify risk and select the most durable intervention for each patient.^{29,30}

CONCLUSION

In summary, venoplasty has emerged as a vital procedure in the management of vascular access for dialysis patients, demonstrating significant effectiveness in restoring adequate blood flow in veins affected by stenosis or thrombosis. The reviewed studies indicate that venoplasty achieves success rates of 70-90%, leading to improved vascular access, reduced need for repeat interventions, and enhanced overall patient outcomes. The role of venoplasty in the dialysis landscape is crucial, as it not only addresses immediate access issues but also contributes to the long-term safety and efficacy of dialysis treatment. By optimizing vascular access, venoplasty helps minimize complications, reduce hospitalizations, and improve patients' quality of life. As the prevalence of chronic kidney disease continues to rise, integrating venoplasty into standard care protocols will be essential in ensuring optimal dialysis management. Continued research and refinement of techniques will further enhance the benefits of venoplasty, solidifying its place as a cornerstone in the approach to vascular access for dialysis patients.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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ETHICS CONSIDERATION

This manuscript is a narrative literature review based exclusively on data obtained from previously published studies and publicly available scientific literature. No human participants, patient data, biological specimens, or animal subjects

were directly involved in this study. Therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required in accordance with institutional and international guidelines for literature-based research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RWK conceptualized the study, developed the methodology, supervised the review process, interpreted the findings, drafted and revised the manuscript, and managed journal correspondence. R, NJM, VW, I, EWK, and ES contributed to literature searching, study selection, data extraction, quality assessment, data synthesis, reference management, and manuscript review. S, ED, and FE contributed to administrative coordination, institutional documentation, manuscript preparation, proofreading, clinical interpretation, and critical revision. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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