High Liability Risk of varicose veins treatment complications: A 36-Year Analysis of Claims

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Objective:

To conduct an analytical study of claims related to phlebology practice, classifying them by type of pathology and procedure performed, and attempting to determine the main causes of the claims.

Methods:

All claims recorded in the Professional Liability Service (SRP) database of the Official Medical Association of Barcelona presented between 1986-2022 were studied. A specific database was created to collect quantitative and qualitative variables. Descriptive statistical analysis of the data was performed.

Results:

Out of 10,846 claims registered between 1986 and 2022, 153 cases (1.4%) were related to vascular surgery. Of these, 47.7% (73 cases) involved venous pathology and 52.3% (80 cases) arterial pathology. Among venous claims, sclerotherapy complications (24.6%, 18 cases) and neurological injuries (30.1%, 22 cases) were the primary reasons for claims, making up 54.7% of the total. Thromboembolic disease post-surgery followed (12.3%, 9 cases). In sclerotherapy complications, skin necrosis was 50% (9 out of 18), hyperpigmentation 22.2% (4 cases), and one recorded death. Professional liability was found in 72% (13 out of 18) with an average compensation of 12,270.5 euros, and 68.7% of these were settled out of court. Neurological injuries involved the common peroneal nerve in 54.5% (12 cases) and the saphenous nerve in 22.7% (5 cases). Professional liability was found in 59% (13 out of 22) with an average compensation of 36,750 euros, and 61% of lawsuits were settled out of court. The average liability rate for all vascular claims over 36 years was 30.8%.

Conclusion:

Varicose vein treatments have a higher risk of claims and liability compared to arterial procedures. Neurological injuries from varicose vein treatments and minor complications in foam sclerotherapy are the main causes of liability. It is necessary to improve mechanisms for the prevention of claims, such as obtaining signed informed consent and maintaining accurate clinical records.