Advances in carotid interventions: Understanding treatment options and outcomes.

Troy Ligon*

Department of Cardiology, Harvard University, Boston, USA

Introduction

There are two main types of carotid interventions: carotid endarterectomy (CEA) and carotid artery stenting (CAS). CEA is a surgical procedure that involves making an incision in the neck, locating the blockage in the carotid artery, and removing it. CAS is a less invasive procedure that involves inserting a small mesh tube called a stent into the artery to hold it open and allow blood to flow freely. Both CEA and CAS are highly effective at treating carotid artery disease, and the choice of which procedure to use depends on several factors, including the severity of the blockage, the patient's age and health status, and the surgeon's preference and experience. In general, younger patients with fewer health issues may be better candidates for CAS, while older patients or those with more complex blockages may benefit more from CEA [1].

One of the most significant advances in carotid interventions in recent years has been the development of embolic protection devices (EPDs). EPDs are small devices that are used to capture any debris that may break off during a carotid intervention procedure and prevent it from traveling to the brain and causing a stroke. The use of EPDs has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of stroke during and after carotid interventions. Another important advance in carotid interventions is the use of new imaging technologies, such as duplex ultrasound and magnetic resonance angiography (MRA), to improve the accuracy of diagnosis and treatment planning. These imaging technologies allow surgeons to better visualize the location and severity of blockages in the carotid arteries, which can help them to choose the most appropriate intervention method and optimize outcomes [2].

The development of new materials and techniques for stent placement has also improved the safety and effectiveness of CAS. For example, some stents are coated with medication that can help to prevent blockages from recurring, while others are designed to be more flexible and conformable to the shape of the artery, reducing the risk of damage or dislodgement during the procedure. In addition to these technical advances, there has been growing recognition of the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to carotid interventions. This involves close collaboration between surgeons, interventional radiologists, neurologists, and other healthcare professionals to ensure that patients receive the most comprehensive and coordinated care possible. This approach can help to optimize outcomes and reduce the risk of complications and long-term disability [3].

Despite these advances, carotid interventions still carry some risks, and not all patients are suitable candidates for these procedures. Patients who are considered to be at high risk for complications may be better served by medical management of their carotid artery disease, which may involve lifestyle modifications, medication, and regular monitoring. It is important to note that carotid interventions are not a one-size-fits-all solution and must be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Patients should discuss their treatment options with their healthcare provider to determine the most appropriate approach based on their individual needs and medical history [4].

One factor that can impact the success of carotid interventions is the experience of the surgeon performing the procedure. Studies have shown that outcomes are generally better when the procedure is performed by a surgeon with a high level of experience in carotid interventions. Patients should consider seeking out a healthcare provider with a strong track record in carotid interventions to ensure the best possible outcomes. In addition to selecting a skilled healthcare provider, patients can also take steps to reduce their risk of developing carotid artery disease in the first place. This may involve making lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, adopting a healthy diet, and engaging in regular physical activity. Managing underlying conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes is also important in preventing the development or progression of carotid artery disease [5].

Conclusion

Carotid interventions have come a long way in recent years, with advances in technology, materials, and techniques improving outcomes and reducing the risk of complications. While these procedures are not appropriate for all patients, those who are considered suitable candidates can benefit greatly from this type of intervention. By working closely with their healthcare provider and taking steps to reduce their risk of developing carotid artery disease, patients can ensure the best possible outcomes and reduce their risk of stroke and other complications. With continued research and innovation, the future of carotid interventions looks promising, and patients can look forward to even safer and more effective treatments in the years to come.

***Correspondence to:** Troy Ligon. Department of Cardiology, Harvard University, Boston, USA, E-mail: ligon.troy@cardio.chboston.org

***Received:** 27-Feb-2023, Manuscript No. AAINIC-23-90488; **Editor assigned:** 02-Mar-2023, Pre QC No. AAINIC-23-90488(PQ); **Reviewed:** 16-Mar-2023, QC No. AAINIC-23-90488; **Revised:** 21-Mar-2023, Manuscript No. AAINIC-23-90488(R); **Published:** 28-Mar-2023, DOI:10.35841/aainic-6.2.139*

***Citation:** Ligon T. Advances in carotid interventions: Understanding treatment options and outcomes. J Invasive Noninvasive Cardiol. 2023;6(2):139*

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Citation: *Ligon T. Advances in carotid interventions: Understanding treatment options and outcomes. J Invasive Noninvasive Cardiol. 2023;6(2):139*