

### **Complications of PICC lines to treat diabetic foot infection**

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Although peripherally inserted central catheters (PICC lines) have been a major advance in the management of diabetic foot infections, they may be associated with frequent complications. We report the complications which occurred in a series 31 diabetic patients, in whom PICC lines were used to give intravenous antibiotics for foot infections.

The most frequent complication was blockage of the PICC line which occurred in 12 patients. This was successfully treated by flushing with saline/heparin in 8 patients, and installation of urokinase in one patient. Three lines could not be unblocked and the line was replaced by inserting a wire through the old PICC line, removing the latter and then threading a new line over the wire which was then removed, so called rewiring.

Significant migration of the line out of its site of insertion (> 5cm) occurred in 6 patients and this needed rewiring in each case.

In 7 patients, allergic contact dermatitis developed as a reaction to the Tegaderm IV film dressing which was used to secure the site of insertion of the PICC line. This was successfully treated by the pre application of cavilon spray to the skin before reapplying the film dressing in 5 cases. Two patients needed a change in film dressing, one to IV 3000 PICC dressing and the other to VAC film dressing. Cellulitis around the site of insertion occurred in 3 patients and was treated with antibiotics. The PICC line was removed and a new line inserted in the other arm. There were difficulties in maintenance of the PICC line in 6 patients which included problems concerning the frequency and use of appropriate dressings in between hospital visits in primary care. In conclusion, although PICC lines are associated with problems, it is possible to overcome most of these and further progress can be made with good communication between primary and secondary care.