

The Vasculab Foundation history and mission

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Abstract Vasculab, the Vasculab Foundation and JTAVR are 3 different entities, though they aim at similar goals. The Vasculab Foundation was born in July 2015, while Vasculab, the Vascular List!, is active since 1990, when it was a Fidonet Message List running on the Aquarius Bulletin Board System. Vasculab guests discussions about vascular diseases in an apparently free style. Discussions instead are moderated and driven gently towards scientific goals. The List is subjected to rules, which are summarized in policy documents. Vasculab serves as an Ideas Editor and as a shared basis to elaborate scientific contents, to organize conferences, courses and seminars. Nowadays, the Vasculab Online Events and Debates are considered important appointments for their educational value and research content.

Keywords Non-profit; Vasculab List; Internet; Vascular diseases; Philosophy of Science

Historical notes

The history of the Vasculab Mailing List dates long ago (26 years)¹. At the origins in **1990**, Vasculab was a Message List, originated from the **AQUARIUS** Bulletin Board System (**BBS**) at the address **FIDONET 2:335/229**. The Fidonet Nodelist 042 for the Zone 2(Europe), Region 335(Italy), released on Feb 11th 1994, reported the Aquarius BBS as follows:

nodelist.042:;229,Aquarius,Napoli,Fausto_Passariello,39-81-7144110,9600,V32B,V42B,XA

declaring a transfer rate of 9600 bps (really it was much higher) and the adoption of the V32B, V42B and XA protocols. The typical structure of **Fidonet**² was hierarchic, with an automatic scheduled exchange of information between computers in a peer-to-peer fashion. FidoNet was a world-wide organization and provided an effective but

nowadays obsolete way to distribute information on a network³.

In **1994** Vasculab was transferred on the Internet, stimulating people to write for scientific magazines and starting to organize scientific events. Today, Vasculab is a Yahoo! Mailing List, subjected to the general policy of the Yahoo! Groups.

The Vasculab Foundation

Recently a new chapter was added, as since July 2015 Vasculab is supported side by side by the Vasculab Foundation, a non-profit research organization⁴. One of the main goals of the Vasculab Foundation is to sustain the Scientific Research dedicated to Vascular diseases. In the background, but essential to scientific comprehension, there are the basic sciences, the neurosciences and biology in a wider sense, with an important extension to humanities, communication and divulgation. The JTAVR magazine⁵ is another complex sustaining tool, which tries to achieve the same goals in common with the List and the Foundation. Aiming at solidarity too, the Foundation organized till now two phlebological missions toward disadvantaged communities, following a previous volunteer experience of almost 7 years. Vasculab strongly supports non-animal methods in medical experimentation, which is a difficult struggle and needs a long cultural and educational effort.

Vasculab management

Generally Vasculab guests news and discussions about very different topics. Discussions start spontaneously without any invitation, but they are maintained at the highest level, taking advantage of the presence of experienced people in the List. Reports, unusual topics and the collection of new ideas are only an example of the difficult work of Vasculab, which gathers all this material

together to serve as an **Ideas Editor**. This feature of the List is a direct consequence of being a moderated list, where the content of the discussions is gently driven towards a scientific goal. Participation to Vasculab undergoes several ethical rules, with the essential requirement that people must respect each other: for instance, it is necessary to maintain a low tone in discussions. These requirements are well-known rules in the management of mailing lists and generally they are called **Netiquette** (Net-Etiquette) rules⁶.

Vasculab has its policy, which dictates the behaviour for the correct management of the List. A special policy deals with the treatment of data, which must be anonymous and not related to recognizable patients.

The subscription and the active participation to the discussions automatically implies the **Vasculab Policy agreement** by the participant. Should there be any strong and unsolvable disagreement, participants should kindly consider to unsubscribe. **Advertising** of products and devices by companies is limited by several strict rules and generally separated from the scientific content of the messages. In addition, advertising is subjected to fees, in order to fund the activities of the List. On the contrary, scientific participation is free and not subjected to any fee, as it occurs in discussions between friends which meet together, coming from several parts of the world. Today, Vasculab gathers scientific updates, courses and meetings announcements together with scientific discussions in the field of peripheral vascular diseases. The Vasculab structure is typically non-hierarchic. Technically, it is a **moderated Mailing List**, with a fixed Moderator, owing to strong informatics requirements in the daily management. Moderating deals also with technical projects. Practically, discussions are **as free as possible**, with minimal changes in order to insure profitable discussions. Subscribers are stimulated to share information in a democratic environment. Interesting discussions and surveys are often summarized by selected participants for publication on international scientific magazines. In the last years a great amount of time was dedicated to the organization of the residential **Vasculab Conferences** and Seminars, which became an important appointment for researchers in the field of peripheral vascular diseases. Let me cite for instance the Hemodyn series, which is organized each 2 years in Napoli, as an update in peripheral hemodynamics. It is also a great honour that, during the first Hemodyn 2011, the President of the "Union Internationale de Phlebologie" (UIP), at that time Angelo Scuderi, was so stimulated by the scientific content, that he had the idea of organizing the Consensus of Hemodynamics⁷, which was completed and later published in 2016, with the leading role of BB Lee. Thus, Vasculab succeeded again in its role of Ideas Editor! In addition, Vasculab always had and still has a good external relationship with the UIP, as well as with other scientific societies.

It is worth reminding the organization of the **Online Events** in the past years, which were specialized up-to-date discussions in the field of peripheral vascular diseases. An uncommon feature was the democratic election of the President at the start of the scientific event. I would just like to recall the Presidency of John Bergan in the Foam_PFO and the LASER_Floating Events.

During the last year, a new type of online activities, the Online Debates, was started as an evolution in the organization of the previous Online Events. Each Debate has one or more Discussants, together with several Panelists. Since Jan 2015, 4 Vasculab Debates, each 20-25 days length, were organized, with an undoubted success. JTAVR will summarize these Debates in next issues. As always occurs when an initiative or an institution has a long life, we all miss several eminent scientists. We gratefully remind their participation. Vasculab plans to organize the online memorial pages to honour their personal contributes.

Final remarks

Vasculab is not a remote continuous meeting. Essentially a meeting stimulates the discussion, but constrains it into the scientific content of the accepted presentations. The debate is then obliged to follow several pre-defined tracks.

In Vasculab indeed, **each participant can democratically become a protagonist**, thus practically inverting his/her academical role. This happens of course more often in Vasculab during a spontaneous discussion, but less during events and debates.

In addition, everybody, who had the unpleasant but common experience of not having enough time to explain his/her personal point of view, will favourably appreciate the possibility of writing without any limit, although respecting the rules. The online discussion is then a different scientific tool, compared to the Meeting. Let me just summarize several points:

- **No length limit** in questions and answers;
- **No immediate answers**, thus there is time to think (answers travel by mail and are moderated);
- The discussion resembles more a **dialogue between peers**, than a hierarchic dialogue;
- Meetings are conditioned by great organization expenses; there will never be a big meeting about a very rare disease or an orphan drug; online events instead allow discussions about **uncommon and non-remunerative topics**.

The long experience of Vasculab testifies a **continuous appreciation** of the participants. Vasculab thanks them all for their daily attention and availability to be part of the new continuously proposed initiatives.

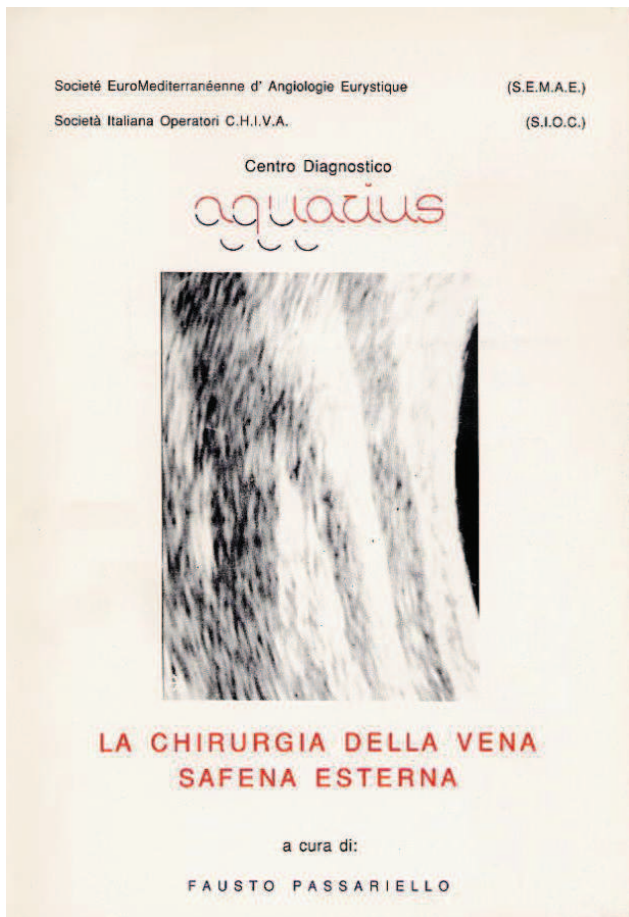


Figure 1 - Short saphenous vein surgery (1991).



Figure 2 - The well tempered encephalon (1997).



Figure 3 - The Sclerosing Foam and Patent Foramen Ovale (PFO) Online Event (2007).



Figure 4 - The Systodiastolic Online Event. The systodiastolic reflux in venous dynamical manoeuvres and its interpretation (2013).

Appendix I - Vasculab Activities

The Vasculab web site: <http://www.vasculab.it>

Books

La Chirurgia della Vena Safena Esterna. 1991⁸. (Figure 1)
L'encefalo ben temperato. 1997⁹ (Figure 2).

Chivaref

Chiva references in the world¹⁰. Last updated in 2004.

The Hemodynamics Courses and the International School of Vascular Ultrasound

- MEVc (2008-2009), SHDyn (2010-2011), Ecocolordoppler, Emodinamica Venosa. (2014), ClidLy (2011).

The Vasculab Conferences

Short Saphenous Vein Surgery 1991, The well-tempered Encephalon 1997, Clinica e Diagnostica delle Linfopatie 2006, Lymphup 2011, Hemodyn 2011-13-15, Compression 2012, Venous Thromboembolism 2013-15, Bedside Oxygen Cascade 2014.

The Online Events

- The ICIVP Project: The Project on Informed Consent In Vascular Procedures. A distributed collective work¹¹.

- Foam_PFO: SCLEROSING FOAM AND PATENT FORAMEN OVALE. The on line discussion on the M.V. Forlee JVS paper. President: John Bergan^{12 13} (Figure 3).

- CHIVALAB: THE CHIVA LABORATORY. CHIVA 20 YEARS LATER. President: Paolo Zamboni.

Appendix II - The Vasculab Identity Card (at the date of Dec 30th, 2016)

Name: Vasculab (The Vascular List!)

Typology: Mailing List

#subscribers: 2345

Language: English (tolerated also Italian, French and Spanish)

Countries

Europe

Italy, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Belgium, Nederland, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Monaco, Finland, Norway, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Republic of Serbia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Ukraina, Hungary, Moldavia, Romania, Macedonia, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey.

Africa

Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Senegal, Cameroon, South Africa.

North America

Appendix III - Rules Vasculab Policy

1) VASCULAB is a restricted Yahoo! Message List, open only to members

2) Active participation to the List must be approved by the Moderator.

3) Accepted members, mainly people of several professions involved in the management of vascular diseases, must respect generic "Netiquette" rules (Net

- Laser-Floating: Floating Thrombus and Laser Endovascular Therapy^{14 15}.

- PhysBiol: Physical and Biological Variables in venous diseases.

- WHAT-MD: The WHAT-MD Classification for Venous Interventions

- Systodiastolic: The systodiastolic reflux in venous dynamical manoeuvres and its interpretation (Figure 4).

The Vasculab Debates

VTE_Risk (Fedor Lurie), L-Phys (Waldemar Lech Olszewski), KTrenaunay (Byung Boong Lee), Biofilm (Carolina Weller, Giorgio Guarnera).

The Surveys

The Foam PFO Survey, The Chivalab Survey, The SVT Survey¹⁶, Compression for venous Ulcers, Sugar-Honey¹⁷, the CEAP Survey¹⁸.

Outstanding discussions

Venous valvuloplasty¹⁹.

Venous diagnostics

The Vasculab Manoeuvre²⁰.

Software

The VNet Model.

USA, Canada, Hawaii

Central and South America

Mexico, Cuba, Panama, Colombia, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Chile.

Asia and Australia

Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Japan, South Korea, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailandia, Vietnam, Taiwan, China, Japan, Micronesia, Australia, New Zealand.

Description

Vascular Diseases Discussion List, Vascular Ultrasound Diagnosis, Vascular Biomechanics, Chiva Discussion List, (Chirurgie Hemodynamique de l'Insuffisance Veineuse en Ambulatoire), Haemodynamic Venous Map (MEV), Minimal MEV, V N e t, the Model of the Venous Circulation, Micro-Circulatory Disorders, Lymphatic Diseases, Lasers in Vascular Diseases, Foam and Sclerotherapy.

Etiquette), as also the specific rules and the discussion topics listed in the first message they receive from the List.

4) Topics are many, but they all are scientific ones.

5) Direct consultation with patients is not allowed.

6) Drugs or medical devices promotion is forbidden inside the messages (as also hidden in messages, e.g. mail address of companies and their web sites).

7) Outside of the messages and clearly separated from them, commercial information can be given, though generally subjected to a fee.

Please read and respect also the rules included in the **VASCULAB DATA OWNERSHIP POLICY**. If these rules do not comply with you, it's better to unsubscribe. Participating actively to the discussions automatically implies the Vasculab Policy agreement.

Vasculab Data Ownership Policy

1) Patients data

a. They have to be anonymous, in respect of the privacy, thus there must be no way to identify the patient. This is up to the physician who uploads data.

b. The physician must be the owner of clinical and imaging data or must declare who is the owner and how he got the authorization to publish. Use of unauthorized scientific materials owned by others is a fraud, though we have not nowadays a satisfying method to struggle against it. In conclusion, it is supposed that the uploader is also the owner of data or has the authorization to do it.

c. As an appendix to the previous point, data cannot be published if they are included in an ongoing judgement. Publication of data to gather opinions of Vasculab participants nor the citation of Vasculab discussions is permitted as an attached document to a still open legal report or trial. Participants are strongly requested to avoid these embarrassing situations.

2) Reuse of data

a. The uploader retains the ownership of his data, with the only exception that they can be used only for the official report of the discussion, only if organized by the Vasculab List and citing the owner. If the owner doesn't want to let these data officially reused for the report, he is strongly asked not to upload them. (However, only a limited amount of uploaded data will be reused. In addition, uploaded files are sent only once to the participants, but are not stored on the Yahoo! Website.)

b. People participating to the discussion must consider that data uploaded can be publicly available or instead only attached confidentially. According to this, reuse of data is generally not allowed, unless there is a confidential authorization of the owner.

Though Vasculab strongly defends the ownership and the copyright of data attached to its discussions, Vasculab cannot be considered responsible at all for the use of the uploaded data in a wrong or fraudulent way by third parties. Vasculab can testify the ownership of data or the one who first uploaded them, but cannot make more. For any legal issues and controversies the competent Forum is in Naples, Italy.

Acknowledgements

Vasculab experience started long ago and I would like to thank my past coworkers Amelia Morra, Tiziana Spiezia and Sabina Mazzarella, whilst since 1998 I shared the management of the Vasculab List with my collaborator Iolanda Palma.

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