

Working life (vascular surgery)

This page provides useful information on the working week as well as any on call [1] and other commitments, along with information on who you will work with. The attractions and challenges of the job are also in this section.

"The challenge in vascular surgery is both operative (you need good surgical and endovascular [2] skills) and medical (arterial disease affects many organs, you need to treat the whole patient). To achieve good outcomes you need to meet both these challenges. When you do, often as part of a team, it is very rewarding. Vascular surgery is not dull and routine for very long!??
Consultant Vascular Surgeon.

How your time is spent

Around 40-50% of your surgical work is likely to be emergency surgery and the remainder elective [3] work.

When you are on the emergency duty rota you'll normally start work at 8 am with a ward round to review all the patients under the care of the vascular unit. You will also review patients referred by other doctors and decide whether or not they need emergency surgery. At the end of a day's surgery you would normally hand over to an on call surgeon. This duty surgeon role is often undertaken on a rota basis, for perhaps one in every six weeks, depending on the size of the unit.

Work outside emergency surgery includes attending ward rounds and outpatient clinics as well as elective surgery and other procedures. For high-risk cases it is normal to work alongside another vascular surgeon.

When not performing surgery, vascular surgeons undertake a mixture of ward rounds and outpatient clinics. Outpatient and minor interventions may be provided on hospital sites away from the main vascular unit.

As with any area of surgery you'll have lots of administrative work to complete. This includes writing letters to GPs and patients, other paperwork, attending departmental and multidisciplinary meetings and undertaking research. Teaching undergraduate and postgraduate medical and dental students is often also part of the work.

Many of the patients with arterial disease are elderly and have other medical conditions such as diabetes. However, vascular surgeons treat patients of all ages, often providing help and assistance to other specialties. They may see young patients with arterial disease caused by congenital abnormalities or trauma.

On call and working hours

When you are not working as duty surgeon you could expect to work on an on call basis to deal with emergency cases about one in every six nights/weekends. Many vascular services are now centralised with surgeons working in teams of at least six consultants. This allows services to be delivered around the clock.

Increasingly emergency services are being delivered by consultants, and by working in a large team emergency work can become part of their fixed job plan.

The EU Working Time Directive limits the working week to 48 hours. It is also possible to work part-time once you are consultant, or to train on a less than full-time (LTFT) basis (conditions apply). Find out more about LTFT?training. [4]

- Who you will work with?

Expand / collapse

Vascular surgeons work closely with other staff as part of a multidisciplinary team.

Within the operating theatre you will work with:

- other surgeons [5]
- anaesthetists [6] including specialist vascular anaesthetists
- theatre nurses [7]
- medical students
- doctors in training
- operating department practitioners [8]

Outside theatre you will also work with a wide range of people including:

- patients and their families
- nurses [9] including vascular nurse specialists
- administrative staff [10]
- vascular scientists [11]
- other surgeons and doctors including interventional radiologists [12], cardiologists [13] and cardiothoracic surgeons [14]

Once you are a consultant surgeon you will be leading and managing your team.

- Attractions and challenges of the role

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Vascular surgery is a varied and interesting specialty whether you are performing elective [3] or emergency procedures. The opportunity to save someone's life when they present to accident & emergency with a critical condition such as a ruptured aortic aneurysm is hugely rewarding. Other surgery which might seem more mundane such as varicose vein treatment also offers the opportunity to change a person's quality of life. You'll also be working as part of a very close-knit and supportive team.

Many vascular conditions can now be treated with minimally invasive procedures using the latest medical technologies. Endovascular surgery is advancing rapidly and has improved the outcomes for patients in numerous ways, such as lower mortality rates, shorter hospital stays and a better quality of life. This makes the job even more satisfying.

In many patients with arterial disease surgery is preventative. For example carotid surgery is performed to minimise the chances of a stroke. But there will be times when the outcome for the patient is not as you had hoped. And you'll need emotional resilience in order to deal with families at these difficult times.

Links

- [1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Endovascular>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Elective>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/information-doctors/less-full-time-training-doctors>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/surgery>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/anaesthesia>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/theatre-nurse>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/operating-department-practice/operating-department-practitioner>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/administration>
- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/vascular-science-0>
- [12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/radiology>
- [13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/medicine/cardiology>
- [14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/surgery/cardiothoracic-surgery>