

DEFINITION

1. Varicocele is a state of varicosity of the testicular veins.

CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

2. Usually, symptoms are absent but in some cases the patient complains of a dragging pain in the affected side. It is more troublesome in hot climates.
3. The condition may lead to sub-fertility due to interference with spermatogenesis and may thus come to light during investigation of the infertility.

AETIOLOGY

4. The right testicular vein drains into the inferior vena cava, the left into the left renal vein. Only near their terminations are the testicular veins provided with valves and not infrequently even these valves are absent. There is, consequently, back-pressure in the erect posture.
5. Most varicoceles are noted in the teenage years or early adult life, the left side being affected in 95% of cases. It has been found that in some 16% of these cases the left testicular artery arches over the left renal vein and may obstruct it.
6. Tall thin men are more commonly affected, short stout individuals being seldom affected.
7. Obstruction to the flow of blood in the testicular veins may arise as a result of pressure from an abdominal tumour, especially one arising in the kidney. This form usually only arises in middle life or in the elderly.

CONCLUSION

8. Varicocele is a varicose condition which results from back-pressure into the testicular veins which are congenitally deficient in valves or in which valves are congenitally absent. It can also rarely arise secondary to abdominal tumours. External factors do not play any part in its cause or development although the symptoms may be worse in hot climates.

REFERENCE

Mann C V and Russell R C G (Eds). Bailey and Love's Short Practice of Surgery. 21st Ed. 1992. London. Chapman and Hall Medical. p1481-1482.