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## How much Vascular Disease is reported by the UK Media?

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**How much Vascular Disease is reported by the UK Media?**

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Pre-View Only

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3 Letter to editor  
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6 Dear Sir,  
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10 We wonder if a new policy of media advocacy could be undertaken by health  
11 care professionals to enhance the reportage of vascular disease. Medical  
12 issues covered by print media must be generally 'newsworthy' – perhaps  
13 related to innovations, celebrities and world events. While newspapers are not  
14 primarily involved in health education, they may have an indirect role in how  
15 these issues are perceived [1-2]. Medical coverage may not be very in-depth,  
16 but is usually in an easily comprehensible format, written at an appropriate  
17 reading age for their readers [2].  
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32 Vascular disease is highly prevalent, with large numbers of people affected  
33 directly or indirectly. Vascular risk factors are the focus of sustained health  
34 promotion and political coverage, while recent medical innovations (e.g.  
35 Endovascular therapy) and celebrity illness (e.g. US Senator Bob Dole  
36 diagnosed with an abdominal aortic aneurysm in 1998) have received  
37 widespread reportage.  
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61 In order to estimate the reportage of vascular disease in the UK the top 10  
62 newspapers were assessed for ten vascular terms (claudication, aneurysm,  
63 angioplasty, DVT, leg ulcers, vascular disease, amputation, blocked arteries,  
64 varicose veins and bypass surgery) over a 5-year period (via their on-line  
65 articles search facilities)[3]. 5713 articles were present (mean 10 articles per  
66 newspaper per month); the commonest terms were "Amputation" (1252  
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3 articles, 22%) and “Bypass Surgery” (1072 articles, 19%). The least number  
4 of articles related to “Claudication” (17 articles, 0.3%). Tabloid newspapers  
5 (which represent 31.5% of the daily UK circulation) reported 1266 vascular  
6 articles (22% total), while Broadsheet newspapers (9.7% UK circulation)  
7 reported 4447 articles (78% total)[3-4]. While there is some overlap with the  
8 search terms, this gives an estimate to the amount of coverage vascular  
9 disease receives in the media. As it was not possible to assess the content of  
10 each individual article, we are unsure if there is a genuine prevalence of  
11 certain terms in the media, or if they are secondary to world events (such as  
12 traumatic amputation in areas of conflict).  
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29 We are not sure how much reportage of vascular disease should exist in the  
30 media, but “any publicity is good publicity”. If 6% of the population is directly  
31 affected by peripheral vascular disease, should 6% of all newspaper articles  
32 on health relate to this condition? At present we suspect that this level of  
33 reportage falls far below this. The print media coverage should be consistent,  
34 fair and relevant [5].  
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46 Health professionals, in conjunction with public health officials and journalists  
47 could form a partnership to ensure a co-ordinated approach in how relevant  
48 medical information is presented to the print media. This collaboration would  
49 ensure better dissemination of patient education to the population and  
50 hopefully enhance the background knowledge of common medical conditions.  
51 This new strategy would exist in conjunction with the presentation of medical  
52 information by traditional means (consultations and patient information  
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3 leaflets) and utilise a newspaper’s own writing style and format to ensure  
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5 optimal uptake by readership [6]. We agree with previous hypotheses that  
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8 “The media may be the most important health information source available to  
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10 the general population” and thus we are keen to ensure that health  
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12 professionals can influence this resource [7].  
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