

The **Thalidomide** Trust



What is the best way for venepuncture in my patient with Thalidomide Embryopathy?

Venepuncture can be very challenging in those with Thalidomide Embryopathy due to both shortened limbs and abnormal vasculature. In addition, many thalidomide affected individuals will have had traumatic experiences with venepuncture in the past for the above reasons and may have had occurrences where multiple unsuccessful attempts have been taken.

What can I do for my patient?

Ensure that thalidomide affected individuals are seen by the most experienced phlebotomist at the surgery.

It's important to listen to individuals about where the best sites are.

Use of paediatric needles or butterfly needles can be helpful.

Consider the use of paediatric blood containers – which may mean less blood has to be drawn.

Local anaesthetic cream can be of particular use and may help to reduce anxiety.

Allow plenty of time for the phlebotomy appointment.

From a clinician's perspective, it may be helpful to know that ultrasound can aid in the visualisation of vessels, particularly in the groin and neck areas.

What self management strategies could I recommend?

- Advise thalidomide affected individuals to be well hydrated for their venepuncture appointment
- Advise wearing plenty of layers to ensure they are warm for their appointment

Special Considerations

Difficulty undertaking phlebotomy may be an important consideration in choosing medications, for example, choosing drugs that don't require more frequent blood tests, like ACE inhibitors.

How can the Thalidomide Trust help?

The Thalidomide Trust has purchased a Flex Vein Viewer which can be loaned to a beneficiary living in the UK to take with them to a GP appointment when required to give a blood test. This is a hand-held device which uses near infrared light that is absorbed by haemoglobin. It is simple to use and shows the veins to a depth of 10mm. It has had some success for some individuals.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the Health & Wellbeing Team on 01480 474074.