A recent study from the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center shows that ThermaCare Heatwraps are safe and effective for treating painful and potentially dangerous vein inflammation that occasionally occurs after a fairly common medical procedure in children.

The inflammation is called catheter thrombophlebitis (CT), better known simply as phlebitis. It sometimes occurs after intravenous catheter placement and can be the source of significant pain, tenderness and abnormal or impaired functioning in children who develop this complication. Cincinnati Children's places more than 1,600 peripherally inserted central catheters (PICC) each year in acute and chronically ill children who need intravenous medications or nutrition.

A PICC is a slender, flexible catheter, or tube, commonly inserted into a vein in the upper arm and threaded to a larger vein near the heart. The catheter can stay in place for months, allowing caregivers to administer therapy without painful, repeated use of smaller catheters that often are not long lasting.

"Unfortunately, CT has become increasingly prevalent with greater utilization of the PICC device," says Darcy Doellman, R.N., team leader of PICC resource nurses at Cincinnati Children's. "Heat is part of routine therapy for CT, but until recently, longer-term heating sources have not been available. ThermaCare Heatwraps provide continuous, low-level heat over an eight-hour period."

Doellman and her research colleagues studied patients who met criteria for CT. Criteria included pain, swelling, redness, tenderness and a cording, or stiffening, of the vein due to inflammation. Children in the study were treated for eight hours each day from one to three days. Complete and rapid resolution of symptoms occurred in 90 percent of patients with no complications. "These findings are a considerable improvement compared to previous treatment approaches, which could not provide low-level heat over an extended period," according to Brian Jacobs, M.D., a critical care physician at Cincinnati Children's and senior author of the study.

"ThermaCare provides an efficient way to deliver continuous low-level heat to the skin of children for CT," says Dr. Jacobs. "A larger, randomized control trial of extended release heat vs. intermittent heat for the treatment of CT appears warranted to substantiate these findings."

The study was sponsored by The Procter and Gamble Co. and the results were presented this month at the annual meeting of the Society of Critical Care Medicine in San Francisco.

Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center is a 475-bed institution devoted to bringing the world the joy of healthier kids. Cincinnati Children's is dedicated to transforming the way health care is delivered by providing care that is timely, efficient, effective, family-centered, equitable and safe. Cincinnati Children's ranks third nationally among all pediatric centers in research grants from the National Institutes of Health. It is a teaching affiliate of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. The Cincinnati Children's vision is to be the leader in improving child health. Additional information can be found at http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org.

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