

# The Vicious Cycle of Vascular Access (L.J Kelly, A Snowden, R Patterson, K Campbell)

Edinburgh Napier University, United Kingdom

## BACKGROUND

Vascular Access Devices (VAD) are essential for the delivery of intravenous therapies. As patients often live with these devices in place for many months, it is important to understand how patients make sense of living with these devices. AIM: To explore, in-depth, the lived experience of cancer patients with a Vascular Access Device. Following a review of the current available literature, certain gaps were evident, including a focus on patient experience and meaning making. The majority of previous studies focus on patient satisfaction and quality of life rather than patient experience. Therefore, in-depth, meaningful details about how participants make sense of their experiences and their meaning-making processes have been understudied. The approach taken for these studies focused on the 'what' of the experience rather than 'how' the experience impacted on the participant.

## DESIGN / METHODS

This study followed an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify eleven patients who had a vascular access device in situ and were willing to share their experiences. Semi-structured interviews were the data collection tool. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed using IPA.

## FINDINGS

Four super ordinate themes, some with related sub themes emerged from the study:

- **THE SELF UNDER ATTACK**  
The violation of vascular access  
Accepting the ordeals of vascular access
- **BEING RESCUED / BEING ROBBED**  
Being thrown a lifeline  
Device as part of self  
Better than the rest
- **PROTECTION OF OTHERS / PROTECTION OF SELF**
- **BEWILDERMENT AND DISMAY AT LACK OF STAFF COMPETENCE**

*Being attacked by a needle,  
It felt like they were stabbing  
me to death*

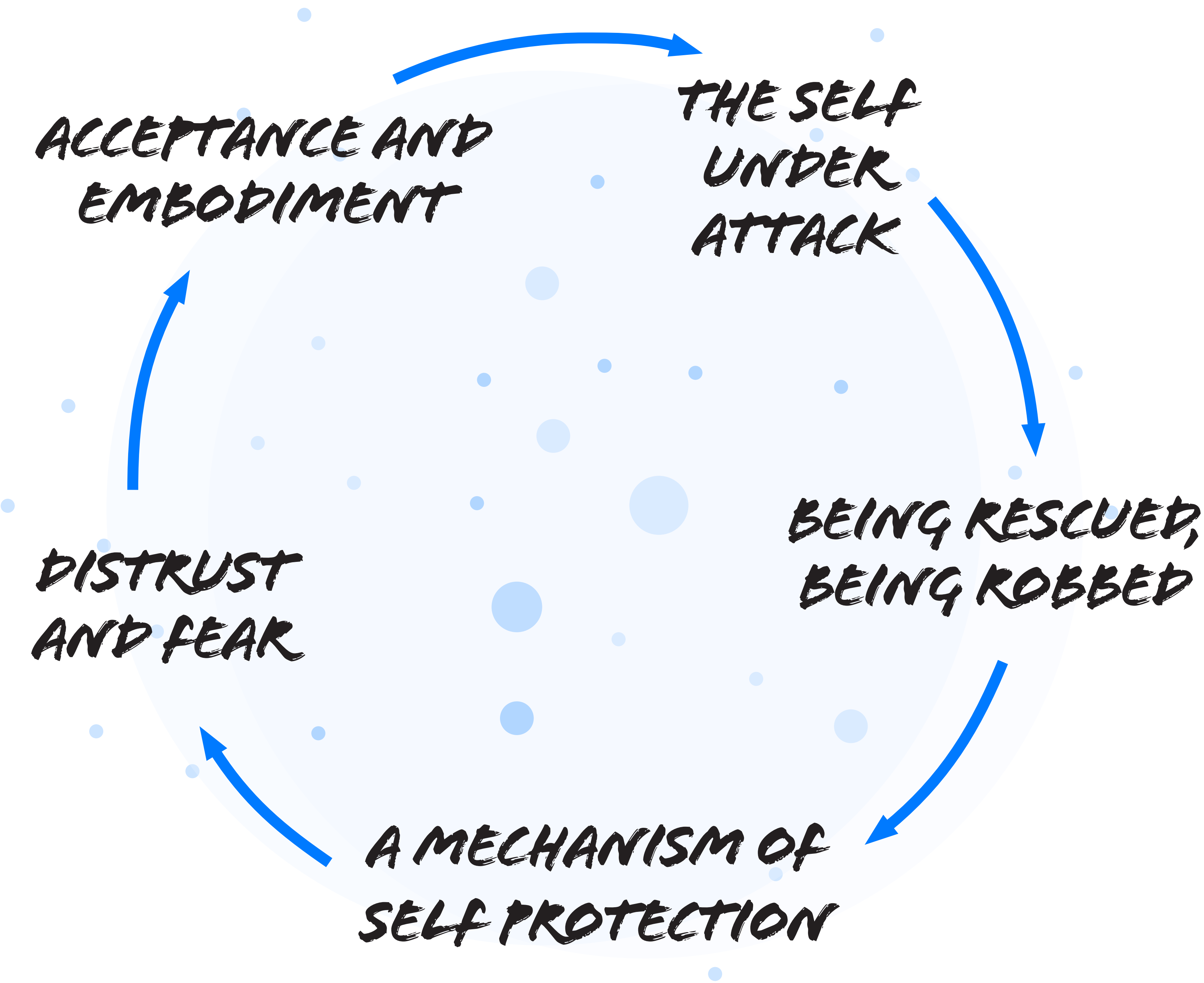


Figure one: The vicious cycle of vascular access

## DISCUSSION

This study discovered that the insertion of a long – term VAD changes a person and affects the psychological, social, and personal self. It impacts on self – esteem and self - image. The insertion of a VAD results in restrictions and limitations to life and can lead to living with distrust and fear. Despite this, VADs are accepted and are eventually embodied. These findings add to existing knowledge by developing the meaning of living with a VAD. To illuminate this understanding and articulate the new knowledge the conceptual framework entitled the vicious cycle of vascular access (ViCoVA) was developed. When the decision is made to insert a long- term VAD, both the body and mind should be considered. Patients must be educated, supported and prepared prior to device insertion. In addition, education and training in the care and management of vascular access devices is crucial and should be offered to all staff responsible for looking after patients with VADs. These interventions will help break the vicious cycle of vascular access and improve the lives of people with a VAD.

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*I don't want anything to be seen. I don't want to be a patient, I mean I don't want people to know, I hate having cancer*

*Care is different in the community, yes, you try to be loyal and you try not to be critical ... you shouldn't be caught in the middle like that*

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