SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

Contact: Kris Mullen
(214) 648-3404
email: kmulle@mednet.swmed.edu

NEW DEVICE FOR TREATING ENLARGED PROSTATES NOW IN USE AT UT SOUTHWESTERN

DALLAS – Jan. 16, 1998 – A new device that uses microwaves to heat and shrink enlarged prostates without surgery or general anesthesia is available in the Dallas area only at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

UT Southwestern urologists have conducted research into heat and microwave treatments for enlarged prostates, or benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), since 1990. Now they have begun treating patients who suffer from BPH -- a source of urination problems for more than half of all men in their 60s -- with a new microwave system that recently received Food and Drug Administration approval.

"This is the first truly outpatient treatment for BPH," said Dr. Claus Roehrborn, an associate professor of urology at UT Southwestern who has led clinical trials to test the efficacy of microwave treatments. "Patients leave the clinic after the hour-long treatment and suffer none of the complications or side effects associated with prostate surgery, such as impotence, incontinence or bleeding."

The microwave device, which uses energy similar to a kitchen microwave oven, offers men the latest technology to treat a condition that for many is an inevitable part of aging. The prostate is a walnut-shaped gland that produces the fluid that transports sperm. It surrounds the male urethra, the narrow canal that carries urine from the bladder to the penis. The gland begins to grow as men age, putting pressure on the urethra, obstructing the normal flow of urine. It can often cause poor urinary flow, frequent urination, an urgency to urinate and nighttime urination.

For centuries, Roehrborn said, men have turned to warm baths and other ways of using heat to relieve symptoms of their enlarged prostates. In recent years, various heat treatments were used with little or no success, until researchers turned to microwaves and worked to improve the technology.

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With the new microwave system, patients receive a local anesthetic and oral pain medication, so they feel little discomfort when the urologist inserts a catheter into the urethra. The catheter contains a microwave antenna and cold water. The water protects the urethra while the antenna sends off microwaves at high temperatures to target and destroy the excess prostate tissue.

"It takes a few weeks for the destroyed tissue to be absorbed by the body and for patients to report significant reduction of their symptoms," Roehrborn said. "But the clinical trials have shown relief will last at least three years."

This week Roehrborn and his colleagues at UT Southwestern began using the Targis microwave system, manufactured by Urologix, as part of their BPH treatment program. The microwave procedure is offered at the James W. Aston Ambulatory Care Center and at Zale Lipshy University Hospital.

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