

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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New laparoscopic hysterectomy offers quicker recovery time, fewer side effects than traditional surgery

DALLAS – March 1, 2005 – More than 600,000 hysterectomies are performed every year in the United States at a cost of \$5 billion, which doesn't take into account the 144 million work hours lost to the average six-week recovery time. Billie Williams of Grapevine had been considering having one for years, but major surgery and a long convalescence didn't fit with her plans.

She eventually opted, however, for a new procedure offered at UT Southwestern Medical Center called a laparoscopic supracervical hysterectomy.

In the procedure, surgeons use new technology to remove the uterus and sometimes one or both ovaries through tiny incisions. Unlike in traditional hysterectomies, the cervix is not removed.

The patient's hospital stay is dramatically reduced from a few days to a matter of hours. Post-surgical pain is much less, and recovery time is shorter – usually only a week.

"I definitely wish I had had the surgery sooner," Ms. Williams said, adding that three tiny incision scars are her only souvenir from the surgery. "The pain I had been experiencing is gone, and when I went home I felt so good I had a hard time making myself stay in bed."

That's the beauty of the new procedure, said Dr. Mayra Thompson, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology and one of the surgeons who performs the new hysterectomy.

"This minimally invasive surgery is the way to go; women have a quicker recovery, and are back in the workforce quicker and back to their families sooner," she said.

Surgeons believe leaving the cervix in place also preserves pelvic floor function, preventing the usual incontinence most women experience after conventional hysterectomies.

"For women who have a medical indication for a hysterectomy but who have been afraid of losing the support that the pelvic structure gives or fear losing sexual function, this is an excellent alternative," Dr. Thompson said.

UT Southwestern surgeons are among only a few in Dallas who are using this technology.

"Physicians in the women's center are experts in this surgical procedure," said Dr. Karen

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Bradshaw, director of the Lowe Foundation Center for Women's Preventative Health Care. "This technology has assisted in giving us better results more often with a very low rate of complications."

While many women could benefit from the hysterectomy, those who have very large fibroids, cancer, a history of cervical abnormalities or multiple previous abdominal surgeries are not candidates.

For more information about the surgery, prospective patients should call 214-648-2863.

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