

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN TESTING MICROWAVE TREATMENT FOR ENLARGED PROSTATE

DALLAS — December 6, 1995 — A microwave device that heats and shrinks enlarged prostate tissue without drugs or surgery is being tested at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and affiliated hospitals. The thermal therapy for benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) uses the same kind of energy that heats or cooks food in microwave ovens.

UT Southwestern is one of five clinical trial sites in the United States and the only one in the Southwest.

The microwave device being tested uses higher power than one recently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for treatment of BPH or enlargement of the prostate, a common condition affecting men as they age. According to Dr. Claus G. Roehrborn, assistant professor of urology at UT Southwestern and principal investigator on the clinical trial, the second-generation microwave device generates more heat and promises even greater relief from symptoms of BPH than its predecessor.

The higher-power microwave device has been in use in Canada and Europe for three years. In a recently completed Canadian study, seven out of 10 men reported improvement in their symptoms with fewer serious side effects than those who had surgery.

Microwave treatment has been shown to be nearly twice as effective as alpha-blocker therapy in relieving symptoms of BPH, said Roehrborn. Alpha blockers are one of two kinds of drugs approved by the FDA for treating BPH.

More than half of all men over 50 suffer from BPH. The prostate is a walnut-sized gland in men. Located directly below the bladder and surrounding the urethra, it produces the fluid that transports sperm. The prostate reaches its normal size at puberty and begins growing again around age 50. As the prostate enlarges, it puts increasing pressure on the urethra, obstructing the normal flow of urine.

(MORE)

MICROWAVE TREATMENT — 2

"The concept of heat treatment to shrink the prostate is very old," Roehrborn said. "There are reports of it in Egyptian papyruses."

Now researchers have developed thermotherapy devices using microwaves of the same frequency as those used by household microwave ovens. Antennas mounted on catheters are computer-activated to deliver heat from a microwave generator directly to the inner tissue of the prostate gland.

"This is a very promising method for relieving men's symptoms," Roehrborn said. "It is relatively painless and appears to be effective and virtually problem-free."

Microwave treatment is done on an outpatient basis with local anesthetic or intravenous sedation. Only one 60-minute treatment is required. Side effects are extremely limited, said Roehrborn, and do not include incontinence or impotence that can follow prostate surgery.

UT Southwestern's clinical trial will be conducted at the James W. Aston Ambulatory Care Center, 5323 Harry Hines Blvd., on the medical center's campus and at the Dallas Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, a hospital affiliated with UT Southwestern.

Since the research study is a controlled, randomized trial, only half of the men participating actually will be treated with microwaves. The other half will undergo a sham treatment, with no heat applied. Patients receiving the sham treatment will be eligible for real microwave therapy after six months. Participation in the trial and re-treatment at six months are free of charge.

Men over 50 who suffer from symptoms of BPH, such as frequent, slow or difficult urination, who are not currently being treated may qualify for the microwave study. For more information, they should call UT Southwestern at (214) 648-7959 or the VA Medical Center at (214) 302-7481.

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