

Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, January 23, 2003

SMGH trains area surgeons in revolutionary procedure to end stress urinary incontinence

85% of patients experience full cure

Strathroy, ON—Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital (SMGH) is leading the way in training area surgeons in a revolutionary surgical procedure to end stress urinary incontinence. Five-year studies show that the procedure, GYNECARE TVT Tension-free Support for Incontinence (TVT), cures incontinence in 85% of patients and 11% more experience significant improvement.

Today, Dr. Ian Ferguson, a urologist at SMGH, will train two St. Thomas gynecologists in the TVT procedure. In February, Dr. Ferguson plans to mentor the surgeons in St. Thomas as they perform their own patient cases.

Dr. Ferguson has performed almost 100 TVT surgeries. The procedure is not yet routine at all centres, however it is being performed in Kitchener, Windsor, Owen Sound, and Hamilton.

"This is an amazingly simple procedure that we can offer to many more people because it is minimally invasive," says Dr. Ferguson. "And unlike traditional procedures, studies show that it may last someone a lifetime."

An estimated 170,000 Canadian women between 30 and 55 suffer from stress incontinence: lack of bladder control during sudden movement. Everyday actions such as coughing, sneezing, laughing, sitting down or standing up can cause leakage.

"It just dominates your whole life," says Dr. Clara Thomas, an 83-year old retired English professor who suffered from stress urinary incontinence for at least five years. "The worst part of the condition is that it is involuntary--it just happens and you often don't know until you stand up."

"After the operation, I felt like a new woman," she continues. Dr. Thomas underwent the TVT procedure last Summer.

The TVT procedure involves positioning a 20cm long strip of Prolene polypropylene mesh tape beneath the urethra, the tube that empties the bladder. The tape ends are passed up

.../2

through 1cm incisions in the abdomen, just inside each hipbone, creating a sling that restores the urethra to normal position and ends leakage.

Patients recover quickly, most returning to work in two weeks. The procedure is day surgery (although patients currently stay over one night) and takes approximately 30 minutes under local or general anesthesia. Traditional procedures require an incision from belly button to pubic bone, stitching of vaginal and urethra tissues back into normal position, catheterization, four to five nights in hospital and six weeks recovery.

"We are very proud of Dr. Ferguson's and SMGH's pioneering role in bringing this procedure to more Canadian women," says Mike Mazza, CEO, Middlesex Hospital Alliance. "TVT is just one of the many ways our progressive community hospital is providing leading-edge care." Mazza notes that reducing the length of patient stay helps SMGH reduce overall operating costs.

Dr. Ferguson is recognized as a preceptor, or surgeon educator, by Gynecare, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson and the maker of the product. This will be his first training session.

– 30 –

for more information, contact:

Susan McLean, CFRE
Director of Development
(519-245-5295 x 5025
smclean@smghfoundation.on.ca

About Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital

Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital (SMGH) serves a population of over 32,000 residents in the northwestern region of Middlesex County, the eastern region of Lambton County and the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. SMGH earned a five-star rating for patient satisfaction in the recently released Acute Care Hospital Report.

SMGH is a full service family-centred community hospital providing a comprehensive range of diagnostic and ambulatory services, as well as both primary and secondary care. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has recently approved the expansion of the hospital, including a new emergency and ambulatory care centre.

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc has the second-fastest growing population in Ontario, and is a bedroom community for many residents who work in London and Sarnia. SMGH is the area's fifth leading employer, operating on an annual budget of over \$19 million.

Facts About TVT and Incontinence

- Incontinence is characterized by an inability to close off flow from the bladder to the urethra during sudden movements.
- Incontinence is the commonest cause of admission to long term institutionalized health care centres in the US and Canada.
- Incontinence affects over 2.9 million men and women in Canada. Over 500,000 women between the ages of 30-55 are affected. One third of these women have what is known as stress urinary incontinence (SUI), a treatable condition that affects women of all ages.
- SUI is the unintentional release of urine during physical activities such as coughing, laughing, sneezing, exercising, having sex, getting up from a seated or lying position, or other ordinary movements.
- In women, SUI is commonly caused by weakening of the pelvic floor muscles, where muscles cannot hold the urethra in its correct position; or intrinsic sphincter deficiency (ISD) where the sphincter muscles that hold the urethra closed do not function as they should.
- SUI is not necessarily part of the aging process. It affects women of all ages and is commonly caused by: childbirth, pelvic surgery, menopause or estrogen deficiency, or neurological conditions such as spinal cord defects.
- TVT (tension-free vaginal tape) is made from Prolene™, a proprietary polypropylene mesh created by Johnson & Johnson. Prolene™, is the second most inert foreign substance available for use in the body, next to titanium (hip replacements), and has been used in hernia repair for over 25 years.
- The TVT procedure was developed in the 1990s by Swedish urologist Dr. Ulf Ulmsten. Over 250,000 procedures have been done worldwide, including some 7,500 in Canada. Windsor urologist, Dr. Bassel Al-Farra, is credited with bringing the procedure to Southwestern Ontario and has performed more than 400 procedures.
- Performed under local anesthesia, the TVT procedure takes only 20-30 minutes to complete. Patients who undergo this procedure have a short recovery period and experience few complications and minimal scarring after surgery.
- The TVT tape features a rough side, similar to the loop side of a piece of Velcro™ which bonds to the patient's own tissue in five to seven days.
- Studies show an 85% cure rate and a further 11% of patients experience considerable improvement.

