

Laser surgery can help women who are suffering with chronic pelvic pain

Durham, N.C.—Lasers are used for more than high-tech light shows and armament guidance systems.

Nowadays, physicians are guiding lasers through myriad medical procedures—reattaching a retina or removing a birthmark, for instance. And laser surgery can spell relief for some women with chronic pelvic pain, according to a gynecologist at Duke University Medical Center.

"Right now the major indication for the laser's use is to relieve pain caused by mild to moderate endometriosis and adhesions," said Dr. John Steege, an associate clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology and one of several physicians performing the procedure at Duke. "Although chronic pain has many causes, taking down adhesions can sometimes be a useful part of the treatment package."

An important advantage for the patient is that the surgery is performed on an outpatient basis, so that she can return home the same day, he noted.

Endometriosis occurs when endometrial tissue (which lines the inside of the uterus and is shed during menstruation) somehow escapes into the abdominal area. It's believed that small amounts of the tissue back up through the fallopian tubes and attach to the ovaries and other abdominal organs.

Despite their displaced locations, these bits of endometrium continue to grow in response to the hormones secreted during a normal menstrual cycle. Although pain does not always accompany endometriosis, inflammation, scarring and adhesions (fibrous tissue that holds together normally separated organs) often do occur around the tissue. And the disease can block fallopian tubes and distort reproductive organs—a ma-

ior cause of infertility in women, Steege noted.

If undetected or left untreated, a number of sexually transmitted diseases can spread throughout the reproductive organs, causing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID is of special concern, Steege said, because scarring, adhesions, pelvic pain and infertility can result. Because they may produce minimal symptoms in women, chlamydia infections (the most common type of sexually transmitted disease) often go untreated, producing PID and its accompanying long-term problems.

The laser is used during laparoscopy, a surgical procedure that requires only small abdominal incisions. The abdominal cavity is inflated slightly by pumping carbon dioxide through a hollow needle passed through the navel. The laparoscope, a long tube about the thickness of a large nail, is inserted through an abdominal incision. The instrument allows the physician to see the internal structures without actually cutting open the abdomen.

Many of Steege's patients with pelvic pain undergo laparoscopy for diagnostic purposes. "We do the laparoscopy with the laser setup available in the operating room," Steege noted. "If present, small amounts of endometrial tissue or scarring can be removed during the same operation." The procedure takes between one-half and two hours.

The laser literally cooks aberrant tissue by heating the contents of the cells, Steege noted. "The laser produces a controlled amount of tissue damage and coagulates small blood vessels at the same time. It really expands what we can do during laparoscopy."

But laser laparoscopy is not a panacea for all women with pelvic pain. Steege noted. "There's no real advantage to using the laser during a laparotomy (when the abdomen is opened surgically). Large endometrial masses as well as extensive amounts of tissue or adhesions, especially if they are close to or attached to the intestines, are best removed using standard surgical techniques."

Steege added that although laser laparoscopy can be used for infertility caused by endometriosis or adhesions, the problem is more often treated with hormonal therapy or with microsurgery during laparotomy. "The effectiveness of laser treatment for infertility is still under study, although it is being extensively used across the country," he said.

Steege and Dr. Anna Stout, an assistant professor of psychiatry and of obstetrics and gynecology, are co-directors of Duke's Pelvic Pain Clinic. "Of all the women we see in the clinic, about 20 to 30 percent have endometriosis," Steege noted. "Many others have adhesions caused by PID, previous operations or chronic disease. In almost all cases, there are stress and emotional factors that require evaluation and treatment as well."

So far nearly 90 percent of Steege's patients have had relief from pain after laser laparoscopy.

"Although we don't have long-term results yet, studies of laser laparoscopy for mild to moderate endometriosis indicate that patients remain pain-free for nine months to more than three years," Steege said. "And these patients haven't lost any time. If they still have pain, we can try other types of treatment."



Fans of the Perquimans County "Marching Pirates" traveled to Edenton on Saturday to support the band during the "Peanut Festival" band competition.

State environmental health week proclaimed by governor

Every year, thousands of homes across North Carolina become hosts to uninvited visitors—bugs, insects, rodents and other pests. These unwelcome pests may create health problems and damage food, clothes, furniture, carpeting and even the entire structure of homes and buildings.

If you've seen evidence of rodents, termites, bugs or mice in your kitchen, cupboards, drawers or bath, there's a good chance your home could be infested with these unwanted pests. For every one you see, there may be hundreds more hiding somewhere in your home.

Governor James G. Martin has proclaimed October 4-10, 1987 as Environmental Health Week in North Carolina. In the proclamation, the governor said that the health and well-being of this state's citizens depend greatly upon maintaining a clean and safe environment.

N.C. Department of Human Resources Secretary David T. Flaherty and the N.C. Public Health Association joined the governor in urging citizens to take an active role in making this state a healthier, happier place to live.

Some of the more common household pests in North Carolina include ants, cockroaches, clothes moths, carpet beetles, crickets, fleas, house flies, spiders, ticks, silverfish, powder-post beetles, wasps, mosquitos, termites, mice and rats. Many of these pests not only contaminate food and infest other areas of the home, they carry disease organisms that can cause typhoid fever, cholera, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, intestinal worms, diarrhea, dysentery, salmonella and many others. Some pests, such as spiders, can cause painful bites.

Bugs and pests in and around the home do not necessarily indicate bad housekeeping because every home, no matter how clean, provides conditions where pests can breed.

While many of these pests are problems mainly during the warmer months, a number of them can be a problem during the cooler weather as well. Carpet beetles, for example, do just as much damage in the winter as in the summer. Fleas may also be active during the cooler months, plus they may lay eggs in carpeting and pet bedding. This could create an infestation in the spring when the eggs hatch.

It is much easier to prevent pests from infesting the home that it is to get rid of them once they are there. These are some housekeeping tips to keep pests away:

- keep floors, windows, window sills, screens, cupboards, baseboards and closets washed and vacuumed. Household pests live on spilled food and organic substances that are not completely cleaned up. They breed and live in small, hard-to-get-to areas such as cracks and crevices where cleaning is more difficult. Scrub these areas frequently with soap and hot water. Be sure to clean these areas before treating them with pesticides. Do not scrub newly pesticide-treated surfaces;
- promptly dispose of food, crumbs, garbage, fabric scraps, lint

and other waste materials where pests may eat or breed;

- store all goods in tightly closed containers. Keep the containers clean inside and out so that the pests will not be attracted;
- before purchasing dry foods, check the packages for breaks where pests might enter and contaminate;
- dispose of cardboard cartons and paperbags used to carry groceries and other materials. Some pests "hitchhike" into your home in this manner, and they could cause an infestation if the containers are stored in the kitchen or basement;
- seal up places where pests may enter. Caulk the openings and cracks around wash basins, toilet bowls, water pipes, drain pipes, and radiator pipes.

Caswell Center receives yearly accreditation from national agency

Kinston—Caswell Center has received two full years of accreditation from a national organization working to improve the quality of life of people with developmental disabilities. The state's oldest and largest center for mentally retarded people, Caswell works with the citizens of North Carolina's 32 eastern counties both on campus and in their home

communities. Caswell currently has 1,000 residents. Of that number, 9 are from Perquimans County.

The accrediting agency is the Accreditation Council on Services for People with Developmental Disabilities (ACDD). A not-for-profit group supported by donations from advocacy and professional groups, ACDD accredits those facilities that meet

its strict requirements regarding the quality of educational, dietary, medical and other services.

Caswell was first accredited in 1985 after working several years to meet ACDD's standards. The accreditation, pursuit of which is voluntary, followed an on-campus visit by ACDD surveyors.

Roanoke pageant seeks contestants

Contestants in the 1988 Miss Roanoke Rapids Scholarship Pageant are now being sought.

Sponsored annually by the Roanoke Rapids Jaycees, the pageant will be held January 9 at the Roanoke Rapids High School auditorium and is open to women between the ages of 17 and 26 years who have never been married. Residents of Halifax, Northampton, Warren, and Hertford counties are eligible to enter.

Entry deadline is December 20. Miss Roanoke Rapids 1988 will be presented a \$700 scholarship and a \$700 wardrobe allowance; first runner-up, a \$400 scholarship; and second runner-up, a \$300 scholarship. Judging criteria are talent, appearance in evening gown and swimsuit, and a personal interview. Winner of the annual pageant will compete in the Miss North Carolina Pageant on June 25, 1988.

For further information, contact pageant chairman Bobby Edwards at 537-8606 or 537-1778, pageant co-chairman Jeane Myrick at 537-4707 or pageant director Grace Boone at 536-2739. Application forms are available at Planters Bank and Waldenbooks, both in Becker Village Mall, State Employees Credit Union in Roanoke Rapids, Ray Barner at Halifax Community College in Welton, and Peoples Bank in Jackson.

Tips about children and smoking

Older smokers aren't the only ones who can get heart disease. Children who smoke can also develop symptoms of the disease.

The earlier a person begins smoking cigarettes, the greater the risk to his or her health in the future. But according to the American Heart Association, even teenagers begin to show signs of disease, such as coughing, decreased stamina and a fast heart rate.

These conditions could worsen over time and develop into heart disease if smoking continues.

But 40 percent of high school students don't believe smoking is a health risk. And that belief could turn into a life threatening habit.

Cigarette smoking is the single most important cause of early deaths. It is also the number one preventable cause of heart disease.

In an effort to dissuade children from lighting up, the American Heart Association, North Carolina Affiliate supports a "no smoking" policy in schools.

Currently, 56 North Carolina school systems have set their own policy and banned smoking on school sites.

Although many teenagers say pressure from school friends is a major reason they smoke, the family also influences the smoking behavior of children. In families where one or both parents smoke, a child is likely to do the same. But the problem is compounded if older siblings smoke. Younger children are more than three times as likely to smoke when they have older brothers or sisters who light up.

Most teenagers have no intention of becoming regular smokers when they start experimenting with cigarettes. Eighty-five percent of teens say they don't plan to carry the habit over five years when they first start smoking.

By the time they reach their late teens, however, many are already addicted.

But according to the American Heart Association, it's never too late to quit. When a person stops smok-

ing, regardless of how long or how much he or she has smoked, the risk of heart disease will be reduced eventually.

The Association offers the following guidelines to help teens kick the cigarette habit:

Tell friends and family of the intention to stop smoking. A public commitment increases willpower.

Don't quit "forever." Just stop for a day. Then try it for tomorrow, and tomorrow.

Pick a "Q" (Quit) Day, and quit. Get together with some non-smoking friends and keep busy.

Eliminate all evidence of cigarettes, such as ash trays and matches.

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As people age, they become more prone to develop opacities or cloudiness of the crystalline lens of the eye. This condition is called a cataract. Although this condition does occur in younger people, those over 55 are most likely to develop cataract.

Like glaucoma, if undetected and untreated, cataract can lead to blindness. If detected early, adequate vision can usually be maintained with the help of glasses until the time when surgery may be required. After the cataract or cataracts are surgically removed, visual help in the form of implanted lenses, spectacles, or contact lenses may help the patient regain clear, efficient vision.

Except in very advanced cases, a cataract is very difficult to see with the naked eye. A doctor of optometry, using a special lighted instrument can detect a developing cataract in a thorough vision examination, so periodic optometric examinations are important in the early detection of a cataract.

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