

# Women's Health Update

## Hysterectomy To Treat Uterine Fibroids May Be Avoidable

(NAPSA)—Uterine fibroids are often a hidden condition that many women know about but don't quite understand. Uterine fibroids are benign tumors that grow in or on the walls of the uterus and can cause severe symptoms such as heavy menstrual bleeding and pelvic pain. For some women, these symptoms are so debilitating that their everyday life is greatly impacted.

However, there's good news for women who develop fibroids. Data published in the January issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology* asserts the long-term efficacy of uterine fibroid embolization (UFE), a less-invasive fibroid procedure that allows women for whom it is medically appropriate to avoid hysterectomy. According to this newly published data reviewing the use of UFE in more than 1,200 women, UFE was found to provide sustained improvement in quality of life and symptom relief. UFE has been performed in the U.S. for more than a decade.

Traditionally, hysterectomy has been the most commonly used treatment method for women with uterine fibroids, but it can create lifelong issues for women. Advances such as UFE may help prevent the common emotional and physical issues related to hysterectomy as well as both short-term and long-term health issues.

"Although hysterectomy is generally considered a safe and effective option, UFE has been shown to be safer, equally effective in terms

of quality of life, and requires far shorter recovery times," said Scott Goodwin, M.D., Chairman and Professor of Radiology at the UC Irvine Medical Center, Interventional Radiologist and the study's lead author. "Studies such as this three-year registry data further support the use of UFE. Women who are candidates for alternative treatment may be able to avoid the potential side effects and complications of hysterectomy."

According to Goodwin, "Women should speak with their physician to find out if they are candidates for UFE. By further discussing alternatives, it may be possible to significantly reduce the more than 600,000 hysterectomies that are performed annually, one-third of which are due to fibroids."

UFE is a nonsurgical procedure performed by an interventional radiologist who inserts microspheres the size of a grain of sand into the blood vessels feeding the fibroids, cutting off the blood supply and causing fibroids to shrink. While a hysterectomy may require a four-to-six-week recovery period, UFE patients typically return home the next day and can resume normal activities in an average of 14 days.

It is important for women to know all of their treatment options in order to make an informed decision. Women who are experiencing symptoms of uterine fibroids should talk to their doctors to determine the best treatment for them.