

MEDIA ALERT

Condoleezza Rice to Undergo Nonsurgical Interventional Radiology Treatment for Uterine Fibroids

Interventional Radiologists Available for Interviews Throughout the Country on Uterine Fibroid Embolization Procedure

Uterine fibroids are very common noncancerous (benign) growths that develop in the muscular wall of the uterus. They can range in size from very tiny (a quarter of an inch) to larger than a cantaloupe. Occasionally, they can cause the uterus to grow to the size of a five-month pregnancy. In most cases, there is more than one fibroid in the uterus.

Twenty to 40 percent of women age 35 and older have uterine fibroids of a significant size. African American women are at a higher risk for fibroids: as many as 50 percent have fibroids of a significant size. Uterine fibroids are the most frequent indication for hysterectomy in premenopausal women and, therefore, are a major public health issue. Of the 600,000 hysterectomies performed annually in the United States, one-third are due to fibroids.

Most fibroids don't cause symptoms—only 10 to 20 percent of women who have fibroids require treatment. Depending on size, location and number of fibroids, they may cause heavy bleeding, pain, urinary frequency and constipation.

About the Procedure

Uterine fibroid embolization (UFE), also known as uterine artery embolization, is performed by an interventional radiologist who makes a tiny nick in the skin, less than one-quarter of an inch, in the groin and inserts a catheter into the femoral artery. Using real-time imaging, the physician guides the catheter through the artery and then releases tiny particles, the size of grains of sand, into the uterine arteries that supply blood to the fibroid tumor. This blocks the blood flow to the fibroid tumor, causing it to shrink and die, and disruptive symptoms to subside. On average, 90 percent of women who have the procedure experience significant or total relief of heavy bleeding and other symptoms. The FDA approved procedure is effective for multiple fibroids, and offers less risk, less pain and less recovery time than hysterectomy—as well as preserves the uterus.

Supplemental materials available

- Interview with local interventional radiologist
- Broadcast quality video footage, includes national expert, patient and procedure footage
- Medical illustration of treatment for your Web site
- Contact: Diane Shnitzler or Emily Oehler at 703-691-1805

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Other UFE Facts

- An estimated 13,000-14,000 UFE procedures are performed annually in the U.S. (as of 2004).
- The embolic particles are approved by the FDA specifically for UFE, based on comparative trials showing similar efficacy with less serious complications compared to hysterectomy and myomectomy (the surgical removal of fibroids).
- UFE is covered by most major insurance companies and is widely available across the country.
- Most women with symptomatic fibroids are candidates for UFE and should obtain a consult with an interventional radiologist to determine whether UFE is a treatment option for them. An ultrasound or MRI diagnostic test will help the interventional radiologist to determine if the woman is a candidate for this treatment.

About Interventional Radiologists

Interventional radiologists are doctors who specialize in minimally invasive, targeted treatments that have less risk, less pain and less recovery time compared to open surgery. They use their expertise in interpreting X-rays, ultrasound, MRI and other diagnostic imaging studies to understand, visualize and diagnose the full scope of the disease's pathology and to map out the procedure tailored to the individual patient. Then during the procedure, they image as they go to guide tiny instruments, such as catheters, through blood vessels or skin, to treat diseases at the site of the illness nonsurgically.

Interventional radiology is a recognized medical specialty by the American Board of Medical Specialties. Interventional radiologists are board-certified physicians with advanced training minimally invasive targeted treatments using imaging to guide them. Their board certification includes both Vascular and Interventional Radiology and Diagnostic Radiology. The American Board of Radiology certifies their specialized training.

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