

# City gynecologist tests new procedure to avoid hysterectomy surgery

By Jen Skerritt

A Winnipeg gynecologist will test to see whether a mild zap of electricity might reduce women's need for hysterectomies.

Dr. Richard Boroditsky, medical director of Victoria Hospital's Mature Women's Centre, will be among the first physicians in Canada to see if an innovative ultrasound probe will destroy fibroids and the painful symptoms associated with the hard, round bits of tissue that grow in or around the uterus.

Fibroids affect up to 70 per cent of women, and doctors are unsure what

causes them. Boroditsky said about a third of women with fibroids will experience heavy bleeding and pressure in the abdomen.

Fibroids are the main reason women have hysterectomies — an invasive surgery to remove the uterus and the most common major surgery for women in the country.

Boroditsky said the slender ultrasound probe is inserted in the uterus and allows him to see where the problematic fibroids are. A needle at the end of the probe is inserted in the fibroids and emits an electric current that kills them. Unlike a hysterectomy — where women could spend up to five days in hospital and six weeks recovering from

surgery — the procedure takes only six minutes and will be done in Boroditsky's office, not an operating room.

He said he thinks the device will not only eliminate the fibroid, but stop the heavy, abnormal bleeding many women with fibroids experience. Winnipeg is the first of four cities in Canada to start the clinical trial, which Boroditsky expects will take a year to complete.

"You put the needle in and zap it," he said. "It saves the patient a lot of time, risk and pain."

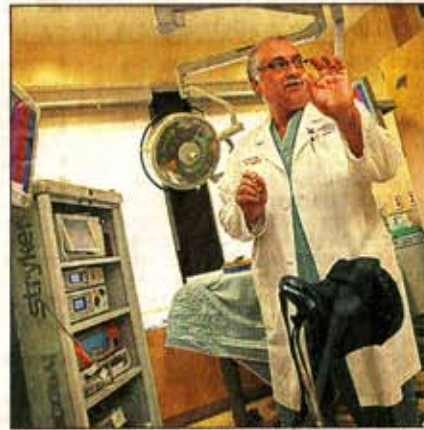
The device trial is the latest local effort at reducing the incidence of hysterectomies, which Boroditsky said is still far too common.

Five years ago, Boroditsky started

using uterine artery embolization — a procedure that cuts off the blood supply to a fibroid, causing it to shrink and thereby relieve symptoms. While the procedure has helped more than 100 women avoid a hysterectomy, Boroditsky said there are still risks associated with the day surgery that ultrasound could eliminate. Embolization takes between 60 and 90 minutes to complete, and involves cutting and risk of infection and other complications.

In Manitoba, 343 women per 100,000 have their uterus removed — a rate that's slightly lower than the national average.

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Dr. Richard Boroditsky: testing device