

Future Treatments for Uterine Conditions

June 2016 Vicki Holmes MD

Usually I discuss practical methods and ways to maintain your health, but today I want to tell you about some exciting new procedures that are being studied.

Recently I attended the Continental Gynecologic Society's annual meeting in Branson Missouri. I was astounded by two presentations.

The first discussed uterine transplants. The presenter was from one of three sites chosen to begin transplanting functioning uteri into women who want to have children but who have a deformed uterus. These sites have chosen volunteers who no longer wish to bear children; incidentally all of these volunteers are nurses. Each goes through a series of tests to make sure her uterus is healthy. Each woman who is to receive the uterus goes through ovarian stimulation to harvest her eggs. These eggs are then tested with a new process that assesses the genetic potential to make sure they are using healthy embryos.

Once the transplant takes place, the women with new uteri are put on immunosuppressive drugs for a year and then the embryo is implanted. Doctors know these medications are safe for the developing fetus, as there are apparently 15,000 babies born to women with other types of transplants who are on immunosuppressive medications. The women are permitted two children, which are delivered by c-section. The uterus is then removed so they do not need to stay on immunosuppressive drugs for the rest of their lives.

This procedure has been performed in Sweden, where the patients' mothers have donated their uteri.

The second astounding presentation was given by a doctor who is using a new machine to treat uterine fibroids. Although we currently have ways to deal with fibroids that protrude into the uterine cavity and those on the outside edge of the uterus, the ones in the middle of the uterine muscle have been difficult to treat. This amazing instrument uses an ultrasound on the end of a cylinder somewhat larger than a large straw. This is passed through the cervix, into the uterus. It

measures how big the fibroid is and how close it is to the outside wall of the uterus. A probe goes through the centre of the machine, expands as it leaves the end of the tube and forms several finger like projections that deliver radio frequencies to the fibroid, destroying it.

It is an amazing instrument that could significantly alter therapy for this condition.

Both of these advances are very exciting. It will be interesting how the research turns out.