

THE STAR 26/3/17

Finding treatments to fight fibroids

UTERINE fibroids are non-cancerous tumours of the uterus that often appear during childbearing years. They commonly cause heavy menstrual bleeding, pelvic pain and pressure, bowel and bladder problems, and sometimes, infertility and miscarriage.

Fibroids are also the leading cause of hysterectomy.

However, there are two treatments that can sometimes be considered before a decision is made to have a hysterectomy.

Fibroid embolisation and focused ultrasound are minimally invasive options that reproductive endocrinologist Dr Ebbie Stewart says warrant more research to help guide women and healthcare providers on a treatment plan.

She co-authored a recent study that looked at the two treatments, compared recovery time, and noted adverse events in the first six weeks after treatment.

"The research found women undergoing uterine artery embolisation have longer recovery times and use more prescription medication, but women undergoing focused ultrasound have longer treatment times," she said.

"I often call focused ultrasound a fibroid-specific treatment. Uterine fibroid embolisation is more of a global therapy, where the pellets (embolic agents) can flow wherever there's blood supply in the uterus," she said.

"While this study shows a quicker recovery for focused ultrasound,

what we're really interested in is how women are doing one- to- three years down the road.

"We want to say to women, based on what we know about you, treatment 'A' is better than treatment 'B'. We hope to have those data in the next year or two."

Fibroids range in size from seedlings, undetectable by the human eye, to bulky masses that can distort and enlarge the uterus.

You can have a single fibroid or multiple ones. Fibroids can be found during a pelvic exam or prenatal ultrasound.

In extreme cases, multiple fibroids can expand the uterus so much that it reaches the rib cage. —

Mayo Clinic News Network/
Tribune News Service



Common symptoms of a uterine fibroid include heavy menstrual bleeding, pelvic pain, bowel and bladder problems, and sometimes, infertility and miscarriage. — TNS