

Photodynamic endometrial ablation

1 Guidance

- 1.1 Current evidence on the safety and efficacy of photodynamic endometrial ablation does not appear adequate to support the use of this procedure outside formal research. It is suitable for use only within good quality research studies approved by a research ethics committee and with explicit patient consent. Publication of safety and efficacy outcomes will be useful in reducing the current uncertainty. The Institute is not undertaking further investigation at present.

2 The procedure

2.1 Indications

- 2.1.1 Photodynamic endometrial ablation is used to treat heavy menstrual periods, also known as menorrhagia.
- 2.1.2 Menorrhagia is a very common problem. Hysterectomy has been the standard treatment for women with menorrhagia who have not responded to medical therapy. Minimally invasive procedures used to destroy the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) are alternatives to hysterectomy. They include using lasers, radiofrequency waves, electrocautery, microwaves, heated saline or a heated balloon. Photodynamic endometrial ablation is one of these minimally invasive procedures.

2.2 Outline of the procedure

- 2.2.1 Photodynamic endometrial ablation involves injecting a photosensitive chemical into the uterine cavity through a hysterosalpingography catheter. A probe inserted through the cervix uses a laser to activate the photosensitive chemical, which destroys the endometrium. It can often be carried out under local anaesthetic on a day-case basis.

2.3 Efficacy

- 2.3.1 The evidence relating to this procedure was extremely limited and was based on one very small case series that included two women with menorrhagia and one woman with prolonged postmenopausal bleeding. For more details, refer to the Sources of evidence (see below).
- 2.3.2 The Specialist Advisors considered photodynamic endometrial ablation to be an experimental procedure not yet ready for routine clinical use.

2.4 Safety

- 2.4.1 The evidence considered by the Advisory Committee was limited – the single study offered no assessment of pain or discomfort during the operation. For more details, refer to the Sources of evidence (see below).

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This guidance is written in the following context:

This guidance represents the view of the Institute which was arrived at after careful consideration of the available evidence. Health professionals are expected to take it fully into account when exercising their clinical judgement. This guidance does not, however, override the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decisions in the circumstances of the individual patient, in consultation with the patient and/or guardian or carer.

- 2.4.2 The Specialist Advisors noted that the photosensitive chemical used in the procedure may cause skin photosensitivity. They commented that the evidence available was too limited to allow accurate assessment of the safety of the procedure.

3 Further information

- 3.1 The Institute has issued guidance on microwave endometrial ablation (www.nice.org.uk/IPG007guidance), balloon thermal endometrial ablation (www.nice.org.uk/IPG006guidance), and free fluid thermal endometrial ablation (www.nice.org.uk/IPG051guidance).
- 3.2 Fluid-filled thermal balloon and microwave endometrial ablation techniques for heavy menstrual bleeding have been appraised as part of the Institute's technology appraisal work programme. Guidance is being prepared.
- 3.3 The Institute is in the process of developing a clinical guideline on hysterectomy and alternative surgical treatments for menorrhagia and other conditions. The expected date of issue of this guideline is September 2005.

Andrew Dillon
Chief Executive
March 2004

Information for the Public

The Institute has produced information describing its guidance on this procedure for patients, carers and those with a wider interest in healthcare. It explains the nature of the procedure and the decision made, and has been written with patient consent in mind. This information is available, in English and Welsh, from www.nice.org.uk/IPG047publicinfo.

Sources of evidence

The evidence considered by the Interventional Procedures Advisory Committee is described in the following document.

Interventional procedure overview of photodynamic endometrial ablation, November 2002

Available from: www.nice.org.uk/IP078overview

Ordering information

Copies of this guidance can be obtained from the NHS Response Line by telephoning 0870 1555 455 and quoting reference number N0484. *Information for the Public* can be obtained by quoting reference number N0485 for the English version and N0486 for a version in English and Welsh.

The distribution list for this guidance is available on the NICE website at URL www.nice.org.uk/IPG047distributionlist

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