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PRESS RELEASE

New Pioneering Heart Surgery at Lancashire Cardiac Centre

HEART patients across Lancashire and South Cumbria are the first in the North West to benefit from a new surgical technique which dramatically reduces scarring and speeds up recovery time.

Surgeons at the Blackpool based Lancashire Cardiac Centre have been trialling endoscopic vein harvesting - a procedure to remove healthy veins from the leg for use in heart bypass surgery.

Traditionally patients would be cut from the top of their leg to their ankle to remove the vein and would be left with an unsightly scar around 40cm long.

Now, thanks to advances in technology, it is possible to perform this procedure in a much less invasive way called endoscopic vein harvesting. It can also be used to harvest the radial artery from the arm in patients with varicose veins.

A 7.5 mm endoscope is connected to a video camera and inserted through a small incision in the patient's leg. The endoscope is used to view the vein and allows the surgeon to remove it with minimal stress to both the leg and the harvested vein. A further incision is then made to disconnect the vein and remove it. This results in less muscle and tissue damage, reduces the risk of wound infection and patients recover from the procedure more quickly. The vein is then used as a graft that surgeons sew in place to bypass the blocked artery in the heart.

This procedure has been carried out on 25 patients so far and has been extremely successful with 100 per cent patient satisfaction.

Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon, Joseph Zacharias, has been carrying out the trial along with Surgical Care Practitioner, Nadene Blakeman. He said: "The results have been fantastic and patients are delighted. As well as being much better for patients in terms of scarring and recovery, it also benefits the hospital too. The nursing staff will have to spend far less time dressing the wounds and there is far less risk of infection.

"We are the first cardiac centre in the North West and only the second in the UK to offer this procedure."

Case Study

One of the patients to benefit from the new procedure is Susan Smith from Bamber Bridge, near Preston. Fourteen years ago she had a triple bypass graft and had the vein removed from her leg using the traditional method. In November 2007 she had a second bypass operation and the vein was removed using an endoscope.

Susan, who is 72-years-old, said: "I still have a scar from 14 years ago where I was cut from my ankle to my groin. It took months to recover and I needed a nurse to dress the wound every day.

"This time I just have a small hole in the middle of my leg and another at the side of my knee which have both healed well. I was back on my feet within six-seven days. The difference between the two operations is unbelievable; I think this will be of huge benefit to patients."

Pic: Mr Joseph Zacharias, Consultant Cardiac Surgeon

For further information about this Press Release, please call Caroline Hastie, Communications Manager, on 01253 303538.