



The Oregon Clinic's Dr. Lee Swanstrom Performed the First Groundbreaking NOTES Gall Bladder Surgery in the US

The "no scar" surgery is one of the first performed worldwide and introduces an entirely new way to operate on the gall bladder

PORTLAND, Ore – June 25, 2007 - Today, The Oregon Clinic (TOC) announced that Dr. Lee Swanstrom and a team of TOC surgeons performed the first transgastric endoscopic cholecystectomy in the US. The procedure involves removing the gall bladder without making traditional incisions on the surface of the skin. The groundbreaking method removes the gall bladder with less pain, less risk of infection, and is projected to significantly reduce recovery time than from traditional surgery.

Natural orifice transluminal endoscopic surgery (NOTES), as it is officially known, involves passing flexible surgical tools and a camera in through the patient's mouth to reach the abdominal cavity via an incision made in the stomach lining. Once the operation is over, the surgeon draws any removed tissue back out through the patient's mouth and stitches up the hole in the stomach.

Dr. Swanstrom, director of Gastrointestinal and Minimally Invasive Surgery (GMIS) at The Oregon Clinic, performed the first surgery on a woman in her thirties who had symptomatic gallstones. The surgery was performed at Good Samaritan hospital under a research protocol approved by the Legacy Health System. The surgery and subsequent surgeries are part of an ongoing research effort that Dr. Swanstrom had begun more than four years ago. This work has been done as a part of NOSCART (The Natural Orifice Surgery Consortium for Assessment and Research: <http://www.noscar.org>). Dr. Swanstrom, one of NOSCART's original members, has worked closely with USGI and other organizations to develop the technology required to perform these procedures.

"I am happy to begin transitioning our research to direct patient care. The success of this surgery will have very positive implications," states Dr. Swanstrom. "We hope it will reduce patient's recovery time due to the less invasive nature of this surgery, reduce their physical discomfort associated with traditional procedures, and leave them with no visible scarring following their surgery."

Much of the discomfort and recovery time after conventional surgery – even with the more advanced keyhole or laparoscopic surgery – is due to the incisions made in the abdominal wall, particularly the larger incision needed to remove the gallbladder. However, because NOTES surgeons reach the abdominal cavity through the mouth, there is potentially no need for an incision, allowing patients to get up and around rapidly and with no physical limitations. Although an incision is made in the stomach lining, this is relatively painless, because the stomach has fewer nerve fibers that register pain than the skin.

"Even with keyhole surgery, patients stay off of work for several days, and have activity restrictions," explains Dr. Swanstrom, "With NOTES they could potentially go back to work the next day."

In the future, the NOTES approach may make it possible for procedures to be carried out under sedation, rather than general anesthetic. Consequently, elderly or infirm patients who would not be fit enough to receive a general anesthetic could still be treated.

Lowered infections

Going in through the stomach will also eliminate the risk of post-operative wound infections or hernias because the skin is never cut. And while there is a risk of infecting the abdominal cavity with bacteria from the gastrointestinal tract, studies suggest that the risk is small. Not to mention, it is common practice to cut the abdominal cavity in other common surgeries such as placement of feeding tubes or ulcer surgeries. All of which are routinely performed today.

“Operating through the body’s natural orifices offers promise for faster healing times, less scarring and less pain which could lead to reduced hospitalization and quicker recovery,” said David W. Rattner, M.D., co-chair of NOSCAR’s ASGE/SAGES Joint Committee and Chief of General and Gastrointestinal Surgery, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston. “These first successful transgastric gall bladder removals signify a major advance in the field and we congratulate Dr. Swanstrom and his team on this achievement. We are delighted to see the potential benefits of NOTES being investigated in an objective manner by one of the world’s leaders in minimally invasive procedures in a responsible and ethical manner.

In the past two weeks, Dr. Swanstrom has performed two additional successful oral NOTES surgeries under his Legacy research protocol. All patients have had no complications and reported a faster recovery. To facilitate the procedure, the surgeons utilized a new surgical platform – the EndoSurgical Operating System or EOS (USGI Medical, Inc.) - to remove patients’ gall bladders through the mouth.

“The ability to manipulate, cut and sew tissue is especially challenging when working through the GI tract which is both long and flexible,” said Dr. Whiteford, assisting surgeon for the surgery and the colorectal surgeon at The Oregon Clinic’s Gastrointestinal and Minimally Invasive Surgery Division. “Using new tools like the EOS, we were able to complete most of the procedures through the stomach using surgical maneuvers widely used in laparoscopy. We look forward to advancing the practice of NOTES by applying these new tools to other procedures in the months to come.”

Patients interested in the research study and surgery can contact Dr. Lee Swanstrom at the Gastrointestinal and Minimally Invasive Surgery (GMIS) division of The Oregon Clinic at 503-281-0561.

About The Oregon Clinic

The Oregon Clinic is one of the largest private specialty physician practices in Oregon. An evidence-based, multidisciplinary organization, The Oregon Clinic provides the highest quality care using a team approach to address medical conditions in the areas of cardiology, gastroenterology, neurology, pulmonology, urology, podiatry, otolaryngology, radiation and medical oncology, cardiothoracic surgery, and general and minimally invasive gastrointestinal surgery. The Oregon Clinic is committed to provide the highest quality care, to practice data-driven medicine, to provide leadership for the healthcare community, and to offer respectful, compassionate service. It was founded in 1994 with the merger of several clinical groups in Portland, offering specialty care from Vancouver to Salem, and from Gresham to Astoria. The GMIS clinic is located at 1040 NW 22nd, Suite 560, Portland, OR 97210. Visit The Oregon Clinic website at www.orclinic.com.