Virginia Mason Now Offers TIF – a Minimally Invasive Treatment for GERD

Historically, patients who suffer from gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) have had two options: proton pump inhibitors (PPI) or minimally invasive fundoplication (MIF).

Both provide effective relief, but they also have drawbacks. Long-term PPI use may be linked to adverse effects, like poor calcium absorption. MIF, although necessary in certain patients, involves small abdominal incisions and can cause problems like gas bloat and trouble swallowing.

For carefully selected patients, Virginia Mason now offers a new option: transoral incisionless fundoplication (TIF). As the name implies, TIF reconstructs the natural antireflux barrier — without incisions or abdominal dissection.

“Patients experience less pain, no scarring, faster recovery and a shorter hospital stay,” says Michal Hubka, MD, a Virginia Mason surgeon who specializes in minimally invasive and robotic surgery.

The TIF procedure follows the same principles as conventional fundoplication, except that it’s performed through the mouth with an endoscope. During the procedure, the EsophyX device is used to wrap the upper portion of the fundus around the esophagus. The two layers are then joined with fasteners, forming a 270-degree valve beneath the lower esophagus.

“The procedure rebuilds a flap valve in patients with reflux due to an incompetent lower esophageal sphincter or a very small hiatal hernia,” Dr. Hubka says.

Patients are good TIF candidates if they have hiatal hernias that are less than 2 cm, or if they’ve failed PPI therapy or don’t want to continue it. For patients with larger hernias, robotic paraesophageal hernia repair and TIF can be considered in the same procedure.

“TIF is just one of the tools we have to manage GERD and hiatal hernias,” Dr. Hubka says. “We offer the entire spectrum of corrective procedures, from lifestyle changes to surgery. We use our expertise to determine the best option for each patient.”

New Telehealth Capabilities Connect Patients and Providers

An estimated 7 million people will use telehealth services this year — and that number is expected to grow as technology and regulations make telehealth easier to deliver. To better serve these patients, Virginia Mason has been building on its longstanding telestroke program.

“We’ve invested in a more robust telehealth platform, and we’re revisiting our strategy as it pertains to providers, patient access and external partnerships,” says Chad Gabelein, RN, who directs our stroke and telehealth program.

Gabelein and his team are working on two initiatives that push telehealth’s boundaries. The first is providing services directly to patients through a new telehealth platform. For example, after a stroke patient is discharged, they can continue to virtually meet with the neurologist who provided their initial consult.

The second initiative uses telehealth to connect patients with pharmacists. “Patients can discuss complicated medications and regimens right from their home,” Gabelein says. “Before telehealth, they would need to go to their clinic or fly in for that specialized follow-up.”

Our telehealth program already has partners across the region, and is seeking to add new partnerships with clinics and hospitals. Every partnership discussion begins with an in-depth discovery session.

“This isn’t an out-of-the-box service — what sets our program apart is that we consider all options, and customize programs to meet the needs of our partners’ patients and providers,” Gabelein says.
CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION

Temporal Bone Lab with Otology/ Otolaryngology Lectures

**NOV. 1-2:** Increase your knowledge on chronic ear surgery during this 2-day seminar at the Listen for Life Center on our Seattle campus. Through observation, dissections, drilling simulations and lectures, participants will gain a better understanding of the anatomy of the facial nerve and surgical techniques.

**2019 Cardiology Update for the Primary Care Provider**

**NOV. 15:** Learn about the latest in diagnosing, treating and managing hypertension, hyperlipidemia and coronary disease during this 1-day, 9-hour symposium at our Seattle campus.

For more information, email CME@VirginiaMason.org.

**FEATURED VIRGINIA MASON SPECIALISTS**

**Jenny Kaplan, MD, MAS**

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- **EDUCATION:** MD, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, 2011; MAS, University of California San Francisco, 2016; BS, University of California, Los Angeles, 2007
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**Michal (Misha) Hubka, MD**

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- **INTERNSHIP:** General Surgery, Virginia Mason Medical Center, 2006
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