Idaho Hospital Debuts New Reflux Procedure

Bingham Memorial Hospital today announced it will be the first hospital in the Intermountain West Region to offer the new LINX procedure for patients suffering from Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), a chronic disease allowing gastric fluid to reflux into the esophagus, with a new device recently approved by the FDA. A clinical study published in the February edition of the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine discusses the procedure, which will be available to Bingham Memorial patients beginning April 24, 2013. On average, seven percent of individuals in the U.S. suffer from reflux disease.

“For the first time, patients in the Intermountain West will have access to intense relief from reflux disease through the LINX procedure, a minimally invasive laparoscopic technique,” said Louis Kraml, CEO of Bingham Memorial Hospital. “Patients suffering from reflux typically use medications that often don’t fully resolve the problem. We are pleased to offer this new treatment as it represents another example of Bingham Memorial’s leadership and commitment to provide the best patient outcomes for local and regional residents.”

Dr. W. Kurt Birkenhagen, general surgeon with a special interest in esophageal surgery, will perform the new procedure at Bingham Memorial Hospital.

“Symptoms of reflux disease include heartburn, regurgitation, and acid reflux, resulting in chronic pain and injury to the esophageal lining which can later lead to Barrett’s esophagus, a pre-cancerous condition caused by reflux disease,” said Dr. Birkenhagen. “The LINX System device is implanted in the lower esophageal sphincter. The titanium beads contain magnetic cores that prevent the opening of the esophageal sphincter by mimicking the body’s normal function.”

The clinical study published in the New England Journal of Medicine reports that 93 percent of patients that underwent the LINX procedure reported a significant decrease in the need for medication with 100 percent reporting the elimination of severe regurgitation.

“This new advancement revolutionizes the surgical treatment of reflux disease,” said Dr Birkenhagen. “It provides a less invasive and effective surgical option for patients suffering from this condition. For nearly 40 percent of reflux disease patients, medications are not a complete solution, resulting in persistent symptoms that diminish the patient’s overall quality of life. It is my opportunity and passion to provide successful treatment options designed to improve the quality of life of my patients. We are pleased to offer the LINX system for our patients.”

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