

► Fibroid Ablation Latest in Minimally Invasive Gyn Surgery

Uterine fibroids occur in roughly three quarters of women by middle age, with fully half of that number experiencing symptoms. Like other common gynecologic problems, though, this one is yielding to innovative new forms of surgery that are easier to undergo. Transvaginal, robotic, and mini-laparotomy surgeries are becoming standard.

As a key example, Virtua is the first center in the tristate region to provide Sonata, which does not require an incision and uses radiofrequency ablation (RFA) for fibroids. Gynecologic surgeons guide this transvaginal procedure with intrauterine ultrasound and can treat most fibroid types and sizes.

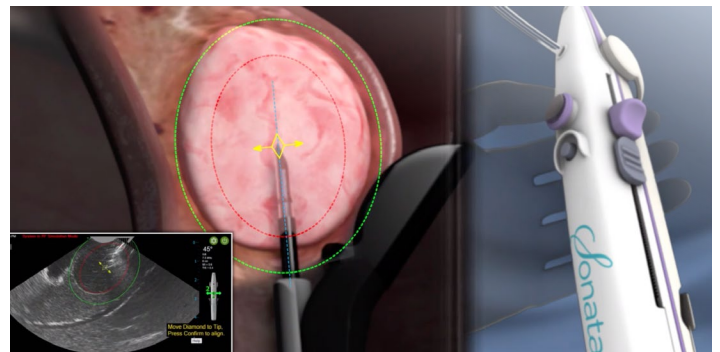
“Most symptomatic fibroids are in a muscular portion of the uterus from which we would prefer not to resect, so this new transcervical approach of ablation has been well received,” said Virtua gynecologic surgeon Dipak Delvadia, DO.

Effective for Symptoms in Almost All Patients

Uterine fibroid intervention is primarily for women who have not reached menopause. Fibroid tumors are the most common indication for a major gynecologic surgery such as myomectomy or hysterectomy. Though these operations have been considered the gold standard for treatment of fibroids, they are procedures that most women would prefer to avoid because of the prolonged recovery and the risk of surgical complications.

Gynecologic surgeons can evaluate small fibroids with hysteroscopy and treat them with minor vaginal surgery. For larger, deeper fibroids, embolization is an option, but one that involves more painful recovery and risk of infection, and is not appropriate for women with child-bearing plans. But RFA needles, first used with liver tumors and now applied to a variety of lesions, destroy tissue through ionic friction and resulting heat that spreads by conduction, cytolizing cells and denaturing their protein through coagulative necrosis. The instrument sets volume of treatment and has a thermal-control sensor. Sonata is an outpatient procedure without uterine incisions, and one that causes no morcellation and

results in faster recovery. Fibroid shrinkage occurs over the next few months. Patients may undergo hormonal treatment to shrink fibroids prior to the procedure, and in some cases may need care to correct anemia.



In the uterine-sparing RFA technique, the gynecologic surgeon sets the margins for ablation with a real-time graphic overlay.

“We were first to be involved in the studies of Sonata. U.S. data showed more than 90% effectiveness in reducing symptoms related to bleeding and bulk,” said Dr. Delvadia. “Patient activity levels and satisfaction are very high, and we urge early treatment rather than waiting months or years after fibroids are identified and symptoms increase.”

Full Range of Min. Invasive Gynecologic Surgery

In addition to RFA for fibroids, Virtua offers the full gamut of minimally invasive surgical techniques, including:

- Vaginal-access hysterectomy
- Laparoscopy for endometriosis or ovarian cysts
- RFA for endometriosis
- Mini-laparotomy, which uses a single small incision for procedures such as myomectomy or hysterectomy



“The other arm of our minimally invasive gynecologic surgery is robotic surgery,” explained robotic fellowship-trained gynecologic surgeon Minda Green, MD. “These offer a precision approach with exceptional visualization—providing micro-dissection advantages including for surgeries for endometriosis, pelvic organ prolapse, and cancer.”

Virtua women's health navigators are available to patients and referring providers at 856-746-4361.

Midwife Care For Full Reproductive Health Span

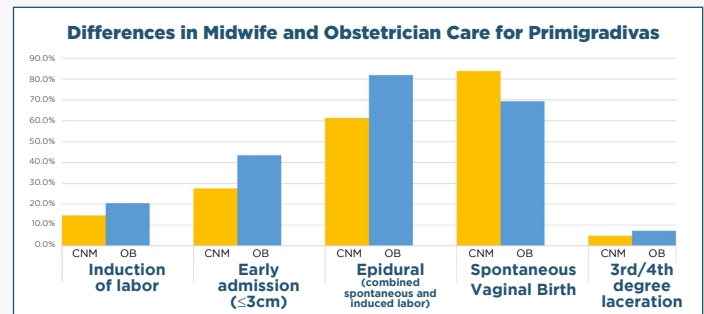
Midwifery is steadily gaining acceptance in the United States. The expansion, though, is not just for care during pregnancy and childbirth. Virtua has supported and built on a model in which certified nurse midwives (CNMs) serve as primary care providers for reproductive health for women from puberty through menopause.

The U.S. has some of the poorest neonatal and maternal outcomes among industrialized countries, and data strongly supports midwife care to help correct this. *The Lancet's* series on midwifery showed that full-scope midwifery can improve more than 50 outcomes for women, babies, families, and health services. These outcomes include saving lives, reducing harm, improving emotional well-being and mental health, and saving resources. With three midwifery practices located in Camden, Sicklerville, and Voorhees, as well as midwives embedded in traditional OB/GYN offices, Virtua is bringing this care option to women across the area.

Last fall, Virtua opened the Midwifery Birth & Wellness Center, the first and only freestanding facility of its kind in South Jersey. Located near Virtua Voorhees Hospital, the practice offers homelike labor and birthing suites that support natural birth, including water birth, the ability to move freely in labor, a private patio for relaxing in an outdoor space, and set procedures for fast hospital transfer if needed—with practices enjoying 24-7 back-up coverage by in-hospital physician-led laborist/delivery specialist teams.

Opened in April, Virtua Midwifery-Camden provides the full range of pregnancy and reproductive wellness care, with services offered in Spanish to meet community need. Births occur at nearby Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. Virtua CNMs have a minimum of a master's degree in

midwifery, are board certified, and enjoy admitting and prescribing privileges. They use a low-tech, high-touch, wellness approach with minimal intervention. Patient entry and tracking goes beyond physical evaluation to assess each mother's work, home, support environment.



Souter, Vivienne MD; Nethery, Elizabeth MSc, MSM; Kopas, Mary Lou MN, ARNP, CNM; Wurz, Hannah MSN, ARNP, CNM; Sircov, Kristin BS; Caughey, Aaron B. MD, PhD Comparison of Midwifery and Obstetric Care in Low-Risk Hospital Births, *Obstetrics & Gynecology*: November 2019 - Volume 134 - Issue 5 - p 1056-1065 doi: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000003521

“Midwives are a great entry point for evidence-based reproductive care and for individuals with lower-risk pregnancies,” said Virtua midwife Sheila Kaufman, CNM. “And for those patients for whom complications arise, we collaborate with Virtua physicians to ensure that we are continuing to provide the highest quality of care.”

The Virtua midwives support family and doula involvement, including for lactation consultation and at bedside during birth. They ensure frequent contact with new parents during the recovery and postpartum period, including help with breastfeeding and confirmation of match with a pediatrician. Virtua CNMs practice under their own licenses, with reimbursement from commercial insurances and Medicaid.

To learn more about midwifery at Virtua, visit virtua.org/midwifery.