

For Immediate Release

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Doctors Use Materials that May be in Your Kitchen or Basement to Treat Uterine Fibroids, Spinal Fractures, Tumors

Renton, WA (September 18, 2008) -- Far fetched as it may seem, medical-grade versions of simple materials found in everyday homes, such as gelatin and cement, may provide patients suffering from a variety of conditions with new hope for successful treatment -- with less pain, less recovery time, and even lower risk, compared to surgery.

But we're not talking about unproven home remedies or questionable "alternative" treatments -- far from it. Instead, versions of these materials that have been refined for medical use, administered by radiologists using state-of-the-art medical imaging technologies, offer clinically sound yet less invasive options to treat such ailments as uterine fibroids, fractured vertebrae, and tumors.

Those of us outside the medical profession may think of a radiologist simply as the professional who reviews our X-rays after an injury. That remains true, but many patients are unaware of the extent to which radiologists, as imaging technology has advanced, have become involved not only in diagnostic procedures but in the use of medical imaging to guide precision devices and materials to treat conditions directly at their source, taking the place of surgery. In medical parlance, this treatment subspecialty of radiology is known as *interventional radiology*.

"Interventional radiology offers patients a non-surgical choice for the treatment of many conditions," said Gordon F. Greenman, M.D., a radiologist and interventional specialist with Valley Radiologists, a practice with six locations in South King County. "We provide effective treatment alternatives that ... return the patient to the business of healthy living as soon as possible."

For example, women may no longer need major surgery to remove fibroid tumors in the uterus. Uterine fibroid embolization is a procedure in which the interventional radiologist inserts small catheters into the uterine arteries and injects a material similar to gelatin or sand to shrink tumors by cutting off their blood supply.

Another application, vertebroplasty, also addresses a health issue of particular concern to women: brittle, fractured, or porous areas of vertebrae -- the many small bone structures that make up the spinal column. Among the causes of such damage to vertebrae is osteoporosis, a condition, more common in women than in men, that can result from calcium deficiency. In

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vertebroplasty, interventional radiologists inject medical-grade cement to repair fractured or porous areas and reduce the likelihood of future fractures.

Also beneficial for spinal conditions is kyphoplasty, which can help relieve pain from spinal compression fractures caused by osteoporosis, cancer, or injury, and realign the back to reduce deformity. In this procedure, an interventional radiologist inflates a balloon-like device to raise the bone to its normal height, stabilizing it with medical-grade cement.

Interventional radiology also provides a non-surgical treatment option for tumors in organs such as the liver, kidney, and lung. In a procedure known as tumor ablation, the radiologist inserts a needle that delivers radiofrequency current to heat and eliminate the tumor tissue, while also closing blood vessels to minimize bleeding.

From the patient's perspective, interventional radiology procedures can be far more appealing and manageable because they can usually be done on an outpatient basis without general anesthesia.

“Surgery used to be the only choice for some patients,” said J. Scott Bowen, M.D., another interventional specialist with Valley Radiologists. “With the wide range of interventional radiology techniques available today, patients can effectively treat many conditions without the invasiveness of a surgical procedure.”

For more information on the interventional radiology techniques provided by Valley Radiologists, visit their Web site at www.vrads.com. In addition to a directory of imaging center locations and practical information for patients and clinicians, the site provides information about more than 20 interventional radiology applications and procedures.

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About Valley Radiologists

For more than 35 years, Valley Radiologists have provided patients with high quality imaging services in southern King County. The group formed in 1970 as a partnership between three radiologists. Today, Valley Radiologists service six imaging sites with more than 20 radiologists on staff. Valley Radiologists are committed to providing patients with state-of-the-art testing in a comfortable and caring atmosphere. For more information on Valley Radiologists and the safety measures in place, please visit www.vrads.com.