



CENTER FOR WOMEN'S CARE AND REPRODUCTIVE SURGERY

Gynecologic Endoscopic Surgery

Internet Lifesaver

Access to information is being revolutionized by the internet -- changing the way people are taking charge of their own health. Patients are dismayed by hometown practitioners who are unable to provide the level of information or care they expect. Many seek alternatives in cyberspace.

"People need access to information and it shouldn't be filtered, so consumers can make informed choices about something as important as major surgery," said 48-year-old Karen Klotter, a resident of Hartford, CT, and vice president of Eastern Rehabilitation Network. She speaks from experience.

At age 18 she underwent her first major abdominal surgery for pelvic pain. The laparotomy (an incision several inches long) and a massive infection caused a need for another surgery to "clean out" her abdomen.

This created a great deal of painful scar tissue, and didn't heal her case of endometriosis. But rather than undergo yet a third "open" surgery for hysterectomy which would help alleviate the problem, she chose to live with incredible pain "like a sledgehammer" for nearly 36 years, while trying to manage the bleeding medically with birth control pills, and 30 or 40 Anaprox a week. Her experiences with traditional surgery had been so extremely negative.

In the major metropolitan area of Hartford and environs, Klotter felt that surely she could find a surgeon capable of performing a hysterectomy using minimally-invasive techniques, which mean less pain, less risk of infection or blood loss, and far less recuperative time. She consulted with three OB/GYNs before even being told that laparoscopic surgery was a possibility for her condition. But no one referred in her area was capable of performing it.

Her sister, a librarian, discovered the Center for Women's Care & Reproductive Surgery on the Internet. "Part of my being impressed with Dr. Lyons was that he's current and he is on the internet," Klotter stressed. To verify what she found on the web page, she cross-checked in medical resources and did an extensive literature search as well.

Since opening a [web page in 1996](#) or [e-mail at cwcrs@mindspring.com](mailto:cwcrs@mindspring.com), the Center for Women's Care & Reproductive Surgery and surgical practice at the Advanced Surgery Center of Georgia and other centers in Metro Atlanta) headed by Thomas L. Lyons, M.D., has seen its Internet patient base expand to approximately half of its clientele, mostly from out of state and many from Europe, Asia and South America.

The Center for Women's Care now has developed a standard protocol for internet patients. First medical records are reviewed thoroughly and Dr. Lyons has an extensive phone conversation with the patient to discuss whether she is a candidate for surgery at all.

If she is a candidate, she prepares for a weeklong stay in Atlanta. Monday includes a pelvic exam and pre-operative activity. If she is an endometriosis patient, Tuesday involves bowel preparation or other pre-op testing. The surgeries, all of which are outpatient procedures with 23-hour stays, are performed on Wednesday. The patient has made her own hotel and caregiver arrangements; Thursday morning she is discharged and rests at her hotel for the day. Friday she sees Dr. Lyons for a post-operative check-up. Most patients fly home on Saturday; many are unassisted.

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Dr. Lyons performs all procedures laparoscopically, including myomectomy for fibroid tumor removal to keep the uterus intact for possible later conception; supracervical hysterectomy which leaves the cervix in place as a keystone to the anatomy; endometriosis surgery; repair of pelvic prolapse or urinary stress incontinence and other solutions to the most intractable-seeming pelvic pain. He has developed several laparoscopic procedures and taught them to surgeons throughout the world.

Office manager Gigi Minicozzi stressed that patients can't be pre-certified for insurance until having been seen by Dr. Lyons, so they must come to Atlanta with the knowledge that their insurance company may not certify them for the procedure.

And come to Atlanta they do.

"It's great that their office handles all the insurance--it's one more thing not to hassle with," said Klotter, who wasn't sure she'd be covered before the trip South. "Since it's a shorter procedure and costs less than a traditional open-abdomen hysterectomy, they covered it, and usually you're bound by what's in your area. Dr. Lyons was one of the few doctors I saw who wasn't condescending. I was pain free following the surgery and went out to lunch two days later," she said.

Dr. Lyons also can be reached at (770) 352-0037 or toll-free at 1-888-545-0400.

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