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Minimally Invasive Surgery Helps Young Cancer Patients Maintain Fertility

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Although the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, pap smears and increased public awareness have reduced cervical cancer rates in the United States, the disease still affects at least 13,000 women annually—many of them in their child-bearing years.

“The average age of cervical cancer patients is in the early 40s, so many women are younger than that and may not have started their families yet,” says [Jeffrey Fowler](#), MD, a gynecologic oncologist with The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital & Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC-James). “In recent years, we’ve often found ourselves treating the cervical cancer while also working to preserve a patient’s ability to conceive.”

In the past, women diagnosed with cervical cancer had two primary treatment options: a radical hysterectomy—removing the uterus, cervix and part of the vagina—or radiation therapy to the pelvis. Both treatment options eliminated a woman’s ability to become pregnant.

The [OSUCCC-James](#) gynecologic oncology team offers a minimally invasive procedure known as a radical trachelectomy to preserve a woman’s ability to conceive post treatment. Unlike traditional hysterectomies, the procedure only requires a fraction of the woman’s reproductive tract tissue be removed, preserving her ability to get pregnant after surgery.

Fowler estimates that about 70 percent of the women who have had this procedure nationwide and then attempted to become pregnant have been successful. The procedure is only appropriate for certain women with early stage, localized disease.

“Fertility just wasn’t a consideration in the past. Introduction of the radical tracheloectomy technique has changed that concept,” adds Fowler. “For women who qualify for the procedure, it can be the best of both worlds, and that’s what we aiming for: cancer eradication and enhanced quality of life.”

More Information

For more information about gynecologic oncology care and clinical trials at The OSUCCC-James, call 614-293-5066 or toll-free at 1-800-293-5066 or visit cancer.osu.edu.

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About the OSUCCC-James

The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center—Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute strives to create a cancer-free world by integrating scientific research with excellence in education and patient-centered care, a strategy that leads to better methods of prevention, detection and treatment. Ohio State is one of only 41 National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers and one of only four centers funded by the NCI to conduct both phase I and phase II clinical trials. The NCI recently rated Ohio State’s cancer program as “exceptional,” the highest rating given by NCI survey teams. As the cancer program’s 228-bed adult patient-care component, The James is a “Top Hospital” as named by the Leapfrog Group and one of the top cancer hospitals in the nation as ranked by U.S. News & World Report.