Uterine artery embolisation versus myomectomy for premenopausal women with uterine fibroids wishing to avoid hysterectomy: the FEMME RCT

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Plain English summary

The FEMME RCT

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Plain English summary

What is the problem?

Uterine fibroids are the most common non-cancerous tumour in women of childbearing age. Uterine fibroids are associated with heavy bleeding, lower chances of having children and reduced quality of life. Traditional surgical options were either to remove the fibroids (via myomectomy) or to completely remove the womb. A newer approach, known as uterine artery embolisation, involves blocking the blood supply to the fibroids in the womb.

What did we plan to do?

We compared myomectomy with uterine artery embolisation in women with fibroids who wanted to keep their womb. We wanted to see which treatment improved quality of life, was associated with the fewest complications and was the best value for money for the NHS. We also wanted to see if either treatment had an impact on women's ability to get pregnant and give birth.

We included 254 women in a clinical trial. Women were assigned to have myomectomy or uterine artery embolisation at random to ensure a fair comparison. Women completed questionnaires about their symptoms and quality of life at intervals up to 4 years after treatment.

What did we find?

We found that myomectomy improved women's quality of life more than uterine artery embolisation. Complications from the treatments occurred in a similar proportion of women. There appeared to be no difference on reproductive hormone levels between treatments. Too few women in the trial got pregnant for any difference in the numbers of women having children to be seen. The differences in costs and overall disease burden were small.

What does this mean?

Both treatments improve quality of life and cost about the same to the NHS but, on average, myomectomy will provide greater benefit to women. There is no evidence to suggest that either treatment is unsuitable for women wanting to get pregnant, but more research is needed in younger women.

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This report

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