



## Synopsis

# Laparoscopic hysterectomy versus open abdominal hysterectomy for women with a benign gynaecological condition: the LAVA RCT

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## Plain language summary

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## Plain language summary

A hysterectomy is an operation to remove the uterus ('womb'). Traditionally, this is done using a large incision ('cut') to open the abdomen ('tummy'), called an 'abdominal hysterectomy'. A 'laparoscopic hysterectomy' avoids large incisions, involving 'key-hole' surgery, where a telescope and other instruments are inserted through small abdominal cuts. Previous studies comparing these types of hysterectomy suggest that recovery may be quicker with laparoscopic surgery but that accidental injuries may be more common. Many gynaecologists believe that these earlier findings to be out of date because there have been advances in equipment and training in 'key-hole' surgery.

We undertook a study where women needing a hysterectomy were randomly allocated to either laparoscopic or abdominal surgery to see which was better in terms of fewer major complications and faster recovery. We found most women willing to take part, but many gynaecologists did not, because they believed laparoscopic hysterectomy is better. The COVID-19 pandemic put pressures on the health service so that clinicians had less time to take part and research capacity was stretched. The study was closed early, because it was taking too long to recruit women.

We randomised 75 women, and 62 received their operation. Two out of 32 women having a laparoscopic hysterectomy had a major complication compared with four out of 30 women having an abdominal hysterectomy. It took seven and a half weeks on average to fully recover after either type of hysterectomy. This number of women was too small to provide reliable results, preventing strong conclusions to help women and doctors decide on the best type of hysterectomy.

As advances in techniques, such as robotic assisted laparoscopic surgery, continue, it is important that we conduct similar trials to understand the relative advantages and disadvantages. We need to find ways of successfully completing surgical trials.

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## This article

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