Birmingham Hip Resurfacing

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Total hip replacement is one of the most successful surgical procedures of all time. Unfortunately, we are now seeing more and more patients with disabling hip conditions at a younger age. Though modern hip implants are improved and can last upwards of 20 years on average, durability is still a concern for those patients in need of a hip replacement who are young and extremely active. For those, hip resurfacing is often the best answer.

In total hip replacement, the ball is removed and a stem placed in the femur with a new ball attached. The socket of the hip is lined with metal and a polyethylene spacer is inserted inside. For this procedure, more bone is removed when compared with hip resurfacing.

Hip resurfacing involves preserving the ball of your hip. The ball is capped with a metal surface and the socket is lined with a metal surface as well. The result is a metal ball that articulates with a metal socket; the arthritic and painful surfaces are gone and you are left with smooth, painless metal bearing surfaces.

The advantage of hip resurfacing is that you preserve more natural bone and in general have slightly better motion afterwards. The metal bearing surfaces are extremely durable and when done correctly have better wear properties than conventional total hip designs. For this reason, hip resurfacing is reserved for young, active patients who need a longer lasting implant that is less likely to wear out due to their activity level.

Metal on metal bearings have caught a lot of attention in the last couple of years due to rare but severe complications. Most of these were related to total hip replacements using this technology and not resurfacing hips. In these total hip implants, there are several parts that key in together and there have been problems with component wear at these junctions. Hip resurfacing implants, though metal on metal, do not have these junctional parts and have not had this problem. Most of the reported problems with hip resurfacing have to do with surgeon or manufacturing error. Anything can fail when done incorrectly! Nonetheless, hip resurfacing is only performed in a select subset of patients that meet very strict criteria.

Currently, I prefer to use the Birmingham Hip Resurfacing system by Smith-Nephew as this has the best track record on the market. There are several technical reasons that make this implant stand apart from its counterparts and have made it outperform its competition over time. I trained with this implant in my fellowship and have travelled to Birmingham, UK to meet the inventor personally and perform surgery with him. For more information about the Birmingham Hip Resurfacing system click here.