Health Tech
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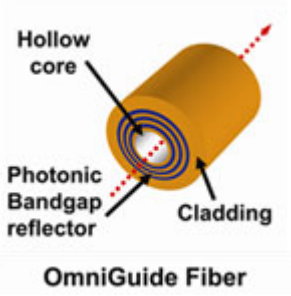
Post-prostate erections? This laser tech may help

by Elizabeth Armstrong Moore

Removing the prostate during prostate cancer surgery can cause long-term sexual dysfunction in men who undergo the procedure. It is far too easy to damage the nerves necessary for erections and urinary continence.

But there are early signs that the **carbon dioxide laser** technology often used in surgery to treat head and neck cancers may reduce the risk of nerve damage in prostate cancer patients as well, **according to research** by urologic surgeons at the **New York- Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center**.



The BeamPath fibers can be scaled to channel different wavelengths of light, allowing for greater precision. (Credit: OmniGuide)

The results of the small, 10-patient pilot study--which used a new, flexible, fiber-based delivery system--appear **in the July issue** of the **Journal of Endourology** and were presented this summer at the **American Urological Association annual meeting** in San Francisco.

"Traditionally, we cut, clip, or cauterize the tissue around the prostate nerves, however, these techniques can cause irreversible damage due to traction or heat injury," says **Ketan Badani**, director of robotic urologic surgery at the center and assistant professor of urology at Columbia University's **College of Physicians and Surgeons**. "The CO2 laser may reduce this risk because it is low-heat and doesn't require much manipulation of the nerves."

The fiber-based laser technology, called **BeamPath**, was provided by **OmniGuide** in Cambridge, Mass. The BeamPath CO2 laser fibers have FDA clearance for a variety of open, endoscopic, and laparoscopic soft-tissue-cutting applications, and they can be

scaled to channel different wavelengths of light for greater precision.

The **American Cancer Society** estimates that one in six men in the United States **will be diagnosed with prostate cancer**, and that in 2009, there were 192,280 new cases of prostate cancer and 27,360 deaths. Prostate cancer is both the second most common type of cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in American men.

Elizabeth Armstrong Moore is a freelance journalist based in Portland, Ore. She has contributed to Wired magazine, The Christian Science Monitor, and public radio. Her semi-obscure hobbies include unicycling, slacklining, hula-hooping, scuba diving, billiards, Sudoku, Magic the Gathering, and classical piano. She is a member of the CNET Blog Network and is not an employee of CNET.

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