

Giving Joint Pain the Cool Shoulder

A new procedure at Greenville Health System (GHS) is making great strides in the treatment of knee, hip and back pain that does not respond well to traditional therapies.

COOLIEF™ Cooled Radiofrequency Treatment uses radiofrequency energy, similar to that used by kitchen microwaves, to block nerve cells' ability to send pain messages to the brain. Unlike standard radiofrequency ablation (RFA), COOLIEF controls the heat of the process by circulating water through the probe.

Katarzyna Kocol, DO, GHS interventional physiatrist focusing on spine, musculoskeletal and pain medicine, was the first in South Carolina to use the treatment on hips.

"I'm very excited about the procedure," Dr. Kocol remarked. "Patients are saying, 'Wow, this feels so much better, so much quicker!' Studies and patient experience have shown it provides up to 24 months of pain relief, which is pretty impressive."

Because the treatment produces a larger lesion, it allows a more precise targeting of the nerve, providing more complete blocking of pain signals than standard RFA. While the procedure, in effect, masks pain, Dr. Kocol commented that patients still will be able to tell if a problem occurs after treatment. Possible side effects are similar to an injection and include pain, swelling or bleeding at the injection site.

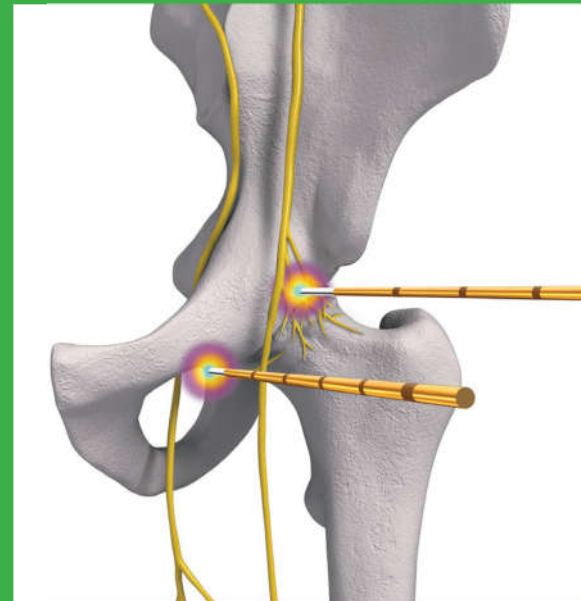
Robert LeBlond, MD, GHS pain management, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist, is finding success with the COOLIEF procedure to treat chronic lumbar spine pain and arthritic knee pain.

"I started using traditional radiofrequency ablation more than six years ago, and relief with the procedure wasn't all that effective," Dr. LeBlond said. "With COOLIEF, the relief is of higher quality and longer lasting."

COOLIEF offers a promising alternative for patients who have not responded well to standard treatments. It also may serve as a bridge therapy for patients who currently aren't candidates for surgery because of age or health issues. The non-surgical procedure is performed on an outpatient basis, with patients usually resuming normal activities in two to three days.

Dr. LeBlond offers encouragement to people with joint pain of an arthritic or chronic nature. "Patients need to know there's hope for chronic pain besides narcotic pain medicine," he commented. "COOLIEF provides marked pain relief, reduces the need for strong pain medication and improves functioning."

COOLIEF is another example of how GHS actively seeks alternative solutions to meet patients' needs. To learn more, please call 1-877-GHS-INFO or visit ghs.org. (Image provided by Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc.)



Cooled radiofrequency lesions form at the target nerves of the hip joint.