

## Vecchietti Procedure

### **What it is?**

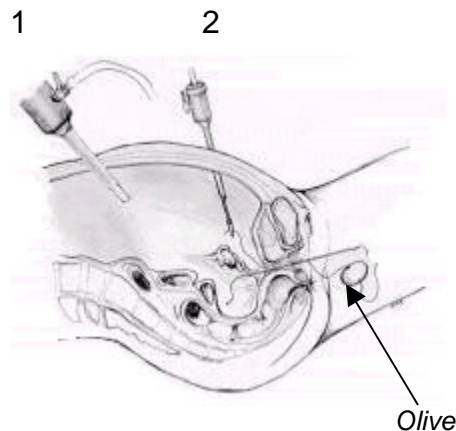
The Vecchietti Procedure is an operation designed to create a new vagina by applying continuous pressure to the vaginal area. It works in a similar way to vaginal dilators, but over a shorter period of time. The aim is to increase the length of the vagina significantly, in a week.

### **Who is it suitable for?**

Any woman who would like to create a vagina, yet has found dilator use very difficult.

### **How is it performed?**

It is carried out in the operating theatre with the patient asleep. A small plastic “olive” is threaded, like a large bead, and put against the vaginal area. A long needle (similar to a knitting needle with a small hole at the end) is used to pass the threads through the vaginal skin and up through the abdomen. The threads are then brought out onto the surface of the tummy just above the pubic hair line. In order to check there are no problems with the position of the threads, a camera checks the inside of the abdomen (laparoscopy) through a small cut in the tummy button. Previously a large cut on the tummy was necessary (laparotomy), but nowadays it can all be done as “keyhole” surgery. The threads are attached to a traction device (like a large spring) which sits against the tummy. The operation takes about 45 minutes.



*Vecchietti Procedure, showing the “olive” being positioned against the vaginal dimple. The laparoscopy telescope (1) is through the tummy button. The second laparoscopy instrument (2) is through a small cut just above the pubic hair line, and is holding one of the threads. Both threads will be brought up through the skin, just above the pubic hair line.*

The vagina is not created during the operation. Instead, the traction device is tightened daily so the olive is pulled upwards and stretches the vagina by approximately 1cm a day. After one week the vagina should be about 7cm long, although can be more than this.

Once the vagina has stretched, the olive and threads are removed. This requires a brief general anaesthetic. Once removed the patient can go home.

It is important to use the vagina after surgery, as otherwise the vagina may shrink down again. This means either using dilators or commencing regular sexual intercourse

### **What are the advantages?**

A vagina is created in a short space of time, without needing to have the major surgery associated with bowel or skin graft vaginas.

There is faster recovery time with keyhole surgery rather than with a cut on the tummy (laparotomy).

### **What are the disadvantages?**

It can be very painful for the vagina to be stretched each day, and strong painkillers are sometimes needed.

It involves a hospital stay of approximately 1 week.

If not sexually active, vaginal dilators will still need to be used afterwards to maintain length, and increase width of the new vagina. This tends to be easier than starting from scratch, although the vagina will shrink if not used.

It involves one operation and then removal of the threads one week later. This means two general anaesthetics although the second one is very brief. Although generally this operation is very safe, all operations and anaesthetics carry small risks.

### **Who carries out the Vecchietti Procedure?**

The operation has been performed in Europe since the 1960s. There are some hospitals in the USA which also perform the surgery. We are one of the first centres in the UK offering it, and also one of the few hospitals performing the operation with keyhole surgery (laparoscopy).

### **Contacts**

If you would like further information, please ask us about it at your next clinic visit, or contact Sister Maligaye Bikoo on: [maligaye.bikoo@uclh.org](mailto:maligaye.bikoo@uclh.org), or 0207 387 9300 ext 2531.