Vacuum assisted biopsy, an alternative to breast surgery

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Vacuum assisted biopsy (VAB) is a breast biopsy technique that can make surgery unnecessary for diagnosis confirmation and the treatment of multiple benign lesions.

**Breast biopsy on an outpatient basis**

VAB does not require hospital admission or going into the operating room. It is an outpatient technique that is performed under local anaesthesia; it is well tolerated by patients of all ages or with conditions that may pose risks in surgical procedures under general anaesthesia.

**Smaller scar and better recovery**

VAB uses a needle that is inserted in the breast to aspirate the lesion in multiple fragments. No skin cuts or stitches are necessary, so no scar is left. The recovery time after a VAB procedure is much shorter compared to a surgical procedure so patients resume their normal life activities in just a few days.

**What patients are candidates for this procedure?**

VAB can be considered as an alternative to a surgical biopsy in three situations:

- For accurate confirmation of the diagnosis of particular lesions observed in a mammogram, an ultrasound scan or an MRI.
- When other biopsy techniques (fine needle aspiration cytology or core needle biopsy) have failed to produce a diagnosis.
- In the treatment of benign lesions very common in women such as fibroadenomas and papillomas (benign tumours that cause nipple discharge).

A joint assessment between the gynaecologist or surgeon and the breast radiologist is the best way to decide when to turn to VAB instead of surgery.