

Hip implant 'lets patient return to active life'

By Paul Stokes

A SURGEON is enabling hip patients to lead active lives and return to playing sport through a pioneering treatment for arthritis.

Derek McMinn is claiming a 99 per cent success rate over the past five years for the 1,220 patients who have undergone his re-surfacing technique of worn joints.

Among them are Jonah Barrington, six times British Open squash champion, David Eddy, former England badminton international, and David Walker, who won the European veterans' judo championship four years ago.

Mr McMinn attributes his success to a metal known as carbon chrome cobalt which is used to give a new surface to the ball and socket joint.

Similar techniques were tried in the 1950s but abandoned because of problems with the Teflon-based material used. Plastic and metal has also been tried, as a replacement for cartilage, but with limited success.

Mr McMinn, 45, a surgeon for 20 years, has carried out 1,400 such operations since February 1991, but has only just made public his work after the results of the past five years became known.

He said: "This is a procedure to treat the group of people who do badly with conventional hip replacement, people who want to return to an active life involving recreational and competitive sport."

The average age of the patients is 48 and the success rate since 1994 compares to a 50 per cent failure rate of conventional hip replacements using plastic joints.

Mr McMinn, based at Birmingham's Nuffield Hospital, asked a precision casting firm, Midland Medical Technologies, to help develop a suitable metal. It worked with Sheffield Hallam University to produce the new implant, which resurfaces the head of the femur with a metal dome which fits into a metal cup attached to the pelvis.

The operation takes about one hour and Mr McMinn says patients are able to return to full-time work in six to eight weeks and become involved in sport after two months.

He says the British medical establishment has so far been cautious. He has written to the British Orthopaedic Association but says it has refused to listen to him.

Mr McMinn said: "Maybe it's because the BOA have a solution to the young patient with hip arthritis and are not telling. Maybe it's because they don't wish to hear of a possible solution, or maybe it's because they have been influenced by too many boring old farts."