Endometriosis: Diagnosing the debilitating condition

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<th>Video</th>
<th>Audio</th>
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| Wendaline VanBuren, M.D.  
Radiology  
Mayo Clinic | "It's part of the disease complexity. And I think one of the most controversial issues that exists with endometriosis is the diagnosis of it. And that has to do with the cell types that are involved." |

Dr. Wendaline VanBuren specializes in gynecologic imaging. She says different patterns of endometriosis mean there’s more than one way to diagnose the disease.

"On the lining of the pelvis, there’s a surface called the peritoneum, which I think of almost like, think of Saran wrap, a thin layer that kind of covers all those pelvic structures, the ovaries, the uterus, the bowel, and then almost like a powdered sugar coating on that. That's called superficial disease — so extremely tiny deposits."

Although it can sometimes be seen on imaging, superficial disease requires laparoscopic surgery for definitive diagnosis.

If the endometriosis is growing into organs in the pelvis or abdomen, that's called deep disease, and surgery may not be needed for diagnosis.

"Imaging is really good at identifying that type of disease, so either a dedicated MRI for endometriosis or an ultrasound."

Processes in the body, such as hormones and inflammation, can affect the appearance of endometriosis differently based on location and cell type.

"And the patient presentation may not necessarily reflect, in terms of the
Dr. VanBuren says high-quality, dedicated imaging for endometriosis is an excellent tool for diagnostic evaluation.

For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm DeeDee Stiepan.