

# Everlasting hip removes pain of replacements

## SURGERY

BRITISH surgeons will announce this week what they claim is the world's first everlasting hip replacement, writes *Roger Dobson*.

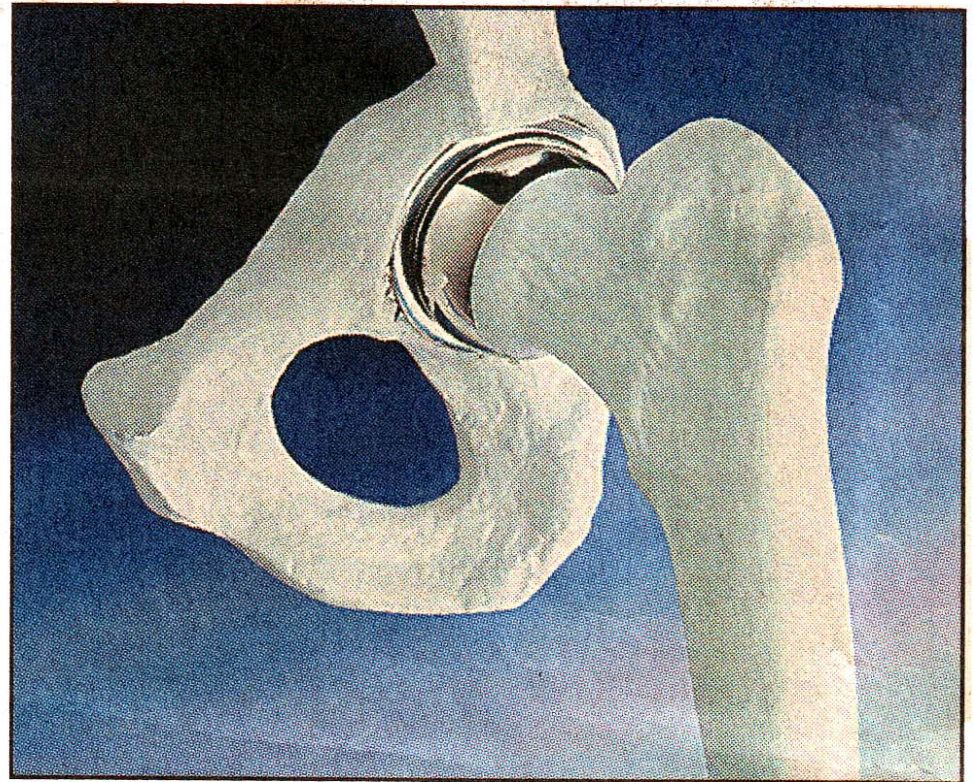
The technique, pioneered by two surgeons at the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, Birmingham, does not replace the natural joint but the damaged cartilage that causes joint pain.

In the operation, the end of the femur is machined to fit a cobalt steel cap and the bone and metal cemented together. A steel cup is fixed into the hip joint with hydroxyapatite, a partly biological material that

allows the patient's bone to grow into a solid fixing.

Derek McMinn, who co-invented the new technique with Ronan Treacy, says: "Technically, we are replacing the cartilage that has worn out. It is the most conservative thing you can do to make a joint pain-free — you simply create new surfaces."

The conventional operation involves removing a large amount of bone from the femur which is then implanted with a metal stem and ball. A plastic cup is fitted into the hip cavity and the ball articulates inside



*The new joint has had a 100% success rate in tests with patients*

this cup, forming a new joint.

The main drawback is that the metal ball wears the softer plastic cup, resulting in plastic debris that causes inflammation, softening of the bone and, eventually, joint failure.

McMinn claims that since the re-coating technique does not lead to such wear, the new

replacements will last for ever.

The new surgical technique also radically reduces pain and recovery times for patients and significantly cuts health service costs, he says.

Tests with 214 patients have so far found the new joint to be 100% successful — double the rate for conventional surgery.