

New diagnostic tool: Tiny camera in a pill

It's a camera in the form of a tiny pill. Patients at Jersey City Medical Center suffering from persistent abdominal pain, diarrhea, bleeding or anemia, can now avoid an endoscopy procedure, which requires anesthesia and entails a physician inserting a long, thin tube into the rectum to inspect the gastrointestinal tract.

Now all they have to do is swallow a tiny tablet.

The pill, weighing less than four grams and containing a digital camera, battery, radio transmitter and light source, is now being used by gastroenterologists at Jersey City Medical Center to transmit images as it journeys through the GI tract.

This procedure, known as capsule endoscopy, allows the

doctor to examine the three areas of the small intestine that are often difficult to visualize through conventional endoscopy because of its 30-foot long length and complex configuration.

"Capsule endoscopy is a very exciting tool because it allows us to detect inflammatory bowel disorders like Crohn's disease, malabsorption disorders, GI injuries, ulcers and tumors of the small intestine that often cannot be adequately visualized when using more traditional modalities like endoscopy or barium x-rays," said Dr. Paul Weissman, chair of the Department of Endoscopy and GI at Jersey City Medical Center.

— JOURNAL STAFF