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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **CHANGING LIVES: 'STAPLER' HELPS PENSIONER SWALLOW AGAIN**

A PENSIONER from Lytham St Annes can enjoy eating food again thanks to a new procedure at Blackpool Victoria Hospital that uses a 'stapler' to deal with a pouch that had developed in throat.

Alan Smith, 89, was first diagnosed with a pharyngeal pouch, also known as Zenker's diverticulum, 12 years ago which resulted in not being able to eat properly, a problem that was finally resolved thanks to a new procedure by Blackpool Victoria's Consultant Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon Mr Ajay Nigam.

Mr Smith said: "Over the past 12 years my 'pouch' became enlarged due to the congestion of food stuck inside. At the point of diagnosis, the only option was a major operation which would have removed the pouch via an incision on the back of my neck – something I did not want to go through.

"However, early in 2010, it reached the point where I was having severe difficulty swallowing anything, apart from liquids, which led to dramatic weight loss. It was at that point that Mr Nigam mentioned a new procedure which was minimally invasive that I agreed to the surgery."

A pharyngeal pouch occurs in the pharynx (the throat) when a piece of the pharynx lining ruptures through the muscles of the pharyngeal wall, causing difficulty in swallowing and eating due to the contents of the pouch causing an obstruction. It can sometimes also cause respiratory problems.

The new procedure called endoscopic stapling of the pharyngeal pouch eradicates, in most cases, the need for invasive surgery, as, under general anaesthetic the opening of the pouch is stapled through a specially designed endoscope.

Consultant Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon Mr Ajay Nigam, who operated on Mr Smith, said "Each year, there is an estimated overall pharyngeal pouch incident rate of about one case per 100,000 people.

"In the past, removing the pouches was via open surgery to the neck, which meant patients had to be fed via a nose tube for up to a week afterward.

"Endoscopic stapling reduces the risk of complications and enables patients to return to normal activities a lot quicker."

Mr Smith added: “The procedure has been a miracle. I am now able to swallow properly and eat food again. I would thank Mr Nigam and his team for improving the quality of my life tremendously.”



**Above:** Mr Alan Smith

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