

NEW TREATMENT

Asthma patients to breathe easy

Sipokazi Fokazi

HEALTHWRITER

CYNTHIA Fortune, 61, of Hanover Park, has had asthma since she was a child.

As she grew older her condition worsened and today the grandmother of nine takes at least 10 anti-inflam-

matories and bronchodilators, uses four different pumps daily, and is in hospital at least twice a month to relieve the symptoms of her severe asthma.

But Fortune's, pictured, dependence on heavy medication to keep her alive is over - thanks to a new treatment called



bronchial thermoplasty.

The new technology, which was unveiled at Groote Schuur Hospital for the first time in Africa yesterday, is a minimal bronchoscopic procedure that heats the wall of the airways in a controlled manner opening them up. Fortune was one of the first

patients to go through the procedure yesterday.

Professor Keertan Dheda, UCT's head of pulmonology, said the procedure was used on patients with severe asthma.

A catheter was put into the constricted airways using bronchoscopy. "What the technology does is that

when the heat is applied on the smooth muscle, which is in fact responsible for constricting of airways, it then makes an effect on the muscle to get thinner and weakens it from constricting. It doesn't cure asthma, but it reduces patients' dependence on medication," he said.

sipokazi.fokazi@iui.co.za