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The Evolution of Lasers in Urology: From Fragmentation to Precision Surgery

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Seth McGurk
Clinical Education Specialist
ForTec Medical

Summary

Not long ago, treating urinary stones and obstructive prostate disease meant invasive surgery, prolonged recovery, and significant patient discomfort. Today, lasers have transformed urology into a field defined by precision, efficiency, and minimally invasive care. From early lithotripsy techniques to advanced fiber laser systems, the evolution of laser technology has redefined what is possible in both stone management and soft tissue surgery.

The Clinical Challenge

Urologists have historically faced a difficult balance: effectively treating stones or obstructive tissue while minimizing trauma to surrounding structures.

- **Urinary stones:** Required either shockwave lithotripsy with variable success or invasive surgical removal.
- **Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH):** Often required TURP (transurethral resection of prostate), which carried risks such as bleeding, infection, and extended hospital stays.

The challenge was clear: develop a modality that could precisely target pathology while reducing complications, operative time, and recovery.

Why it mattered:

- Wavelength (~2100 nm) is highly absorbed by water > ideal for aqueous environments
- Shallow penetration depth (~0.4 mm) > controlled tissue interaction
- Versatility > effective for both lithotripsy and soft tissue applications

Clinical Impact:

- Enabled ureteroscopic laser lithotripsy with high stone-free rates
- Reduced reliance on open or percutaneous procedures

- Became the gold standard for HoLEP (Holmium Laser Enucleation of the Prostate)

Refinement Phase: Pulse Modulation and Dusting Techniques
As experience with holmium lasers grew, so did innovations in pulse modulation and technique.

Key advancements:

- Introduction of Moses, Virtual Basket, Magneto and other pulse shaping methods
- Transition from fragmentation to dusting techniques
- Improved fiber durability and smaller fiber sizes

This phase represented a shift from simply "breaking stones" to optimizing how stones are treated and cleared.

ForTec Solution

Technology & Service Overview
Laser technology in urology has evolved significantly over the past decade:

- **High-Powered Holmium:YAG Lasers:** Offer versatility with specialized treatment modes for effective stone ablation, faster enucleation, better hemostasis, and increased procedural precision
- **Thulium Fiber Lasers (TFL):** Offering improved efficiency, finer dusting capabilities, and reduced retropulsion

Data & Comparison

Financial Advantage:

- No upfront capital investment
- Predictable per-case cost structure
- Eliminates maintenance and repair expenses
- Avoids depreciation of rapidly evolving technology

Technical Advantage:

- Access to the latest laser platforms (holmium and thulium fiber)
- On-demand availability for multiple procedure types
- Support from certified clinical technology specialists
- Reduced risk of obsolescence

Clinical Outcomes & Safety

Advancements in laser technology have directly improved patient care. Higher-powered systems and refined energy delivery enable:

- More efficient stone fragmentation and dusting
- Reduced procedure times
- Improved hemostasis during prostate procedures
- Lower risk of complications and retreatment

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Conclusion

The journey from early laser systems to today's advanced fiber lasers reflects a broader shift in urology toward precision, safety, and efficiency. What began as a novel alternative to traditional surgery has become the cornerstone of modern urologic practice. As technology continues to evolve, lasers will not only refine existing procedures but also unlock entirely new possibilities in patient care, continuing to push the boundaries of what minimally invasive urology can achieve.

Call-to-Action (CTA)

Watch our latest webinars from leading urologists on the latest technologies ForTec has to offer.

Contact your ForTec representative about integrating laser rentals into your workflow.