JEANNETTE LAGER: So when a patient comes in with complaints of either abnormal bleeding or increased girth, we always, of course, take a history, do a physical exam. And usually the next step if we're concerned about fibroids is imaging. The most common imaging we use is ultrasound.

And here you can see an ultrasound. This is a transvaginal ultrasound, so the probe goes in the vagina to get a closer look at the fibroids. Almost always when you get an ultrasound, you'll have a transabdominal ultrasound, and then the patient would have a transvaginal ultrasound. And it just gives us different perspectives to be able to capture all that imaging.

And you can see here there's these two areas that are circumscribed. So these are the two fibroids. Because of the density of the fibroids being different than the muscular layer of the uterus, there's also what the radiologist will sometimes called Venetian binding. So it's just where you can see those lines that come down. This is helpful because there are other conditions that can mimic fibroids, like adenomyomas, which are also a benign condition, but it would be a different surgical approach or different treatments that we would offer depending on what the diagnosis is.

This is an MRI image. So this is of a patient that's standing sideways. And it basically takes cuts this way from hip bone to hip bone. And you can see here is one fibroid that's sitting here. And you can kind of tell that this right here, this is where the bottom part of the uterus is, and the lining, the endometrial lining of the uterus, the middle part. So when you think of the normal-sized uterus, it's about the size of a pear, and you can imagine that this is much bigger than that.

Here's one that's even bigger. This one's almost to the level of the belly button. The umbilicus is right here. And you can envision that when a fibroid is this big-- this is the bladder, the white part-- how much it pushes down on the bladder. This is the back spine. So you can imagine how much it pushes back on the bowels too.

And this one is right here. You can see this is the normal endometrial cavity, the middle part of the uterus that we looked at in those previous pictures. So this fibroid

might not cause heavy bleeding. It might not affect bleeding at all. But certainly a patient would feel that. Here's one that shows multiple fibroids. So the previous image showed one great big fibroid. This you can see there's one, two, three, four, five, several here, one here.

And fibroids are very interesting. Sometimes they can look like little dumb bells. Sometimes they can look like a circumscribed-- just like a sphere. But they look quite different, and they might have different characteristics depending on their blood supply. If they overgrow their blood supply, sometimes they're a little bit softer. So we can see that in the MRI imaging, or we can see suggestions of that.

CT is not usually used to look at fibroids. It's not the best modality to look at the uterus and look at the tissue. However, we can still pick up the fibroids on CT. So a patient might come in for a different reason, and they want to rule out an appendectomy or something like that, and they might have a CT that finds the fibroid.