The current standard of care used by about 80 percent of physicians in the United States when treating benign biliary strictures due to chronic pancreatitis is to place multiple plastic stents. These plastic stents often require replacement an average of five times per year due to clogging. Multiple stent procedures not only impact patients, who may undergo multiple endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatectography (ERCP) procedures in a year, but may also impact time and care workflows for physicians.

Ali A. Siddiqui, M.D., professor at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, has changed his protocol for determining which stent to place. "In the past, I would place plastic stents. However, now for any patient who has a stricture of the bile duct from chronic pancreatitis, I do not bother using plastic stents. I opt for the WallFlex Biliary RX Fully Covered Metal Stent."

How does the metal stent compare to plastic stents when resolving benign strictures due to chronic pancreatitis? Designed with an integrated retrieval loop, the WallFlex Biliary RX Fully Covered Stent System RMV, with its larger diameter, may be left in place for up to 12 months before it needs to be removed, unlike most plastic stents that may require replacement every few months due to clogging. In fact, this fully covered self-expanding metal stent has the radial dilation equivalent to that of at least three side-by-side plastic stents. Therefore, placing the Wallflex Biliary RX Fully Covered Stent from Boston Scientific may reduce the number of reinterventions, potentially contributing to quality of life improvements for patients.

This reduction in repeat procedures each year may also yield economic benefits. In fact, initial placement of a fully covered self-expanding metal stent for benign biliary strictures secondary to chronic pancreatitis may help to avoid the cost of multiple ERCP with stent placement procedures.

"If you look at the overall economic value, it’s clearly been shown that the fully covered stents are most cost effective because they can potentially save patients from having recurrent endoscopic procedures. It also may help to improve the patient’s overall quality of life as they undergo treatment for resolving strictures," said Prof. Siddiqui.

In the United States, the Wallflex Biliary RX Fully Covered Stent System RMV is also cleared for use in the palliative treatment of biliary strictures produced by malignant neoplasms, relief of malignant biliary obstruction prior to surgery.