

Subject: Surgical Robot Will Mean Shorter, Less Painful Recovery
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Some surgery patients at Carolinas Medical Center (CMC) will soon have access to the latest advancement in Minimally Invasive Surgery, an important new tool which significantly reduces the size of incisions to perform heart, prostate and a number of abdominal surgeries. Smaller incisions mean shorter, less painful post-operative recovery time.

The new device, called the “da Vinci robot,” is expected to be available for patient use before the end of the year. The robot will be arriving at Carolinas Medical Center in October, with time allotted for training and certification before the device is brought on-line for patient care.

“We expect to be fully up and running within a relatively brief period,” said Suzanne Freeman, President of Carolinas Medical Center. “Many of our surgeons are already recognized as national leaders in minimally invasive surgery. The addition of the da Vinci Robot will enable us to build on that tradition.”

“The robot is a new technology to further extend the less invasive options available to patients for cardiac surgery,” said Eric R. Skipper, M.D., cardiac surgeon, of The Sanger Clinic. Dr. Skipper added, “The robot complements the ongoing minimally invasive cardiac, thoracic, and vascular surgery program at Carolinas Heart Institute.”

The da Vinci surgical system itself is a large console, controlled by the surgeon, with three interactive robotic arms, specialized surgical instrumentation, and a high-performance video system. The video system provides surgeons with a highly magnified, three-dimensional view of a patient’s interior, while the surgical instrumentation allows for improved precision and manipulation in tight spaces. The robot was approved by the Food and Drug Administration for heart valve surgery less than two years ago, after the completion of clinical trials in 10 medical centers nationwide. Cardiac surgeons at East Carolina University’s Brody School of Medicine took a lead role in the trials, which evaluated results from well over 100 valve surgeries performed using the new technology.

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The initial trials evaluated the safety and effectiveness of the robotic-assisted technique, in comparison with traditional open-chest procedures, in repairing defective mitral valves. The robots are still relatively rare on a national basis, averaging only about three per state. CMC will be one of a handful of medical centers in North Carolina to utilize the devices.

“Robotic technology lends itself well not only to mitral valve repair but to radical prostatectomy, or total removal of the male prostate gland,” said Stephen Moore, M.D., Chief Medical Officer at CMC. “This is an important application, because more than 200,000 American men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year. Da Vinci can be used for many other procedures such as coronary bypass surgery, and throat, vascular, gynecological and intestinal surgeries.”

The key to success with highly sophisticated devices such as da Vinci is having the proper training and experience. Carolinas Medical Center has developed an international reputation for research and clinical applications of minimally invasive surgery. Some 1,300 surgeons from throughout the United States and several foreign countries have visited CMC during the past half dozen years to receive training, participate in fellowships, and study research results.

In anticipation of the da Vinci acquisition, two surgical teams have been working closely with counterparts at East Carolina University who helped to pioneer the technology. The Carolinas Heart Institute team is headed by Dr. Skipper. The urological team is headed by Chris M. Teigland, M.D., of McKay Urology.

Dr. Skipper said the clinical benefits of minimally invasive surgery are well documented. Patient benefits include: reduced length of stay; reduced blood loss and need for transfusion; less post-operative pain and discomfort; less risk of infection; faster recovery time; and faster return to work or normal function.

“The addition of the da Vinci system,” he said, “will broaden the minimally invasive options to patients in the region.”

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Carolinas Medical Center is an Academic Medical Center Teaching Hospital and the flagship facility of Carolinas HealthCare System. Carolinas HealthCare is a not-for-profit, self-supporting public organization offering a wide variety of health and human services to residents of both North and South Carolina.

CHS is the largest healthcare system in the Carolinas, and fourth largest public system in the nation. It owns, leases and manages hospitals, nursing homes, physician practices, home health agencies, radiation therapy facilities, physical therapy facilities, and other healthcare related operations, comprising approximately 4,300 licensed beds and 25,300 employees.

NOTE: The da Vinci™ Surgical System is manufactured by the Intuitive Surgical company. Pictures of the machine, standing alone or in operational use, can be seen at:
http://www.intuitivesurgical.com/news_room/downloads.html

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