

Revolutionary Robotics: Baystate Transforming Prostate Surgery in the 21st Century

by Patricia Gagnon | June 8, 2006

Approximately 16 percent of American men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer sometime in their life. The good news is that with greater public awareness, early detection is increasing and mortality rates are dropping. Better still, new advances in medical technology, such as robotic surgery, are enabling men with prostate cancer to go on to live active, productive lives after treatment. With the acquisition of the da Vinci Surgical System in 2005, Baystate Medical Center became the only hospital with robot-assisted surgery in Western Massachusetts.

Treatment options for prostate cancer depend on a number of factors, including the stage of the cancer and the patient's general health and age. One of the most common treatments for prostate cancer involves the surgical removal of the prostate gland (radical prostatectomy).

Traditional prostatectomies require a long, 8 to 10 inch incision, and results in a lengthy, uncomfortable recovery, and a risk of complications. However, there is now a new minimally invasive approach to this surgery that uses robotic technology.

The *da Vinci* System uses the latest advances in robotics and computer technology and couples it with a surgeon's skill. The result enables surgeons to perform more precise minimally invasive surgical procedures with a field of view as clear as open surgery.

Patient Advantages

Stephen Gallo, MD, attending urologist at Pioneer Valley Urology performs this procedure at Baystate.

"Our experience with robot assisted laparoscopic radical prostatectomies has confirmed the many advantages of this new technology, with our patients benefiting from the minimally invasive approach and the increased surgical precision of the new technique," says Dr. Gallo.

The national experience with robotic prostate surgery has begun to suggest that some significant advantages to patients can be garnered with this approach. Because of greater surgical precision, even

compared with other minimally invasive methods, patients having robot-assisted surgery may have:

- shorter hospital stays;
- less post-operative pain and discomfort;
- decreased risk of infection;
- less blood loss and need for transfusions;
- less scarring; and
- faster recovery and return to work.

Depending on the procedure, patients can return to normal activities in a shorter time than with conventional surgery. Better still, recent studies suggest that the *da Vinci* prostatectomy may improve cancer control and reduce the risk of side effects following surgery.

Two surgeons are trained together for all robotic procedures. The primary surgeon operates from the console, and the second is at the operating table overseeing the procedure, changing instruments, and communicating with the primary surgeon. In addition, Baystate has a dedicated, robotically trained operating room team that is very familiar with the nuances of the robot.

Since urologic robotic surgery was initiated at Baystate, general surgical procedures and cardiac procedures have also been performed using the *da Vinci* System. Dr. Gallo notes that adding that this technology only adds to Baystate Medical Center 's status as a regional center of excellence in minimally invasive surgery. "There are only a handful of hospitals in New England that have this state-of-the-art technology. Through the internet, patients are already aware that this technology exists. Now patients in the community can benefit without having to travel."