

For Those Facing Prostate Cancer, There May Be a Robot in Your Life

By: White Plains Times

Published: September 28, 2006

There may be no ideal way to perform prostate cancer surgery, but Westchester Medical Group's Dr. Judd Boczko is coming close.

Dr. Boczko, one of the area's most experienced physicians in minimally invasive surgical techniques, is among one of a handful of surgeons nationwide performing a type of robotic surgery using the da Vinci robot system.

The da Vinci approach uses a robot, remotely operated by a surgeon, and a highly technical magnifying system that provides the surgeon with a three-dimensional view of the patient's internal organs while controlling the precise movements of the robot.

The surgeon views the internal organs on a screen and remotely operates the robot, which mimics the motions of the surgeon. It's a technique that magnifies vision and increases the reach of the surgeon's hands.

"It allows us to get into places a surgeon's hands could not, and when we get to those hard-to-reach areas, the movements are much more precise," adds Dr. Boczko.

A three-dimensional magnified view, and the ability to move the instruments 360 degrees are particularly vital in operating on a cancerous prostate, where spreading cancer cells may be embedded in healthy nerve endings.

The da Vinci prostatectomy may result in a more complete eradication of the cancerous prostate gland without the potential future damage to the patient's bladder control and potency.

Less Invasive Technique

While it's becoming more and more common for urologists to perform robotic surgery using incisions and performing the surgery internally, Dr. Boczko is one of only a handful of physicians in the Northeast performing the surgery using the remote, or extraperitoneal approach, working from outside the abdomen. This technique is considerably less invasive but technically more difficult and only experienced surgeons can use such an approach.

Dr. Boczko explains, "the advantage of the extraperitoneal approach is that the operation remains outside the area where the intestines are found. This decreases the risk of any intestinal injury. It also speeds up the patient's recovery, as minimal pressure in the intestinal cavity occurs."

"It also allows us to place the patient in a position on the operating table that doesn't produce airway swelling," adds Dr. Boczko. "A lot of urologists only know and use the internal approach, going through the intestinal cavity. But this often produces a lot of airway swelling that causes problems with older patients, or those with lung problems."

According to Dr. Boczko, the end result is a shorter hospital stay, less pain, less risk of infection and less blood loss and transfusions. There's also less scarring, faster recovery and a more rapid return to normal activities.

Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among men in the United States, with approximately 40,000 men dying from it each year. This year, almost 240,000 men will be told that they have prostate cancer, and 16 percent of American men will be diagnosed with the disease during their lifetime.

Dr. Boczko says it's important for patients to be educated about their treatment. In his office, patients can view videos of the robotic surgery and handle some of the equipment involved.

