



SCOTTSDALE HEALTHCARE

Dr. Vijay Swarup (right) guides a new robot used in heart ablations at Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn. The robot is called Hansen.

LIVING WELL

Robo-surgeon Hansen joins Scottsdale hospital

SCOTTSDALE

Barbara Blakemore loves to dance. She likes graceful swing numbers more than the up-tempo tunes her husband, Bud Smith, prefers at their favorite Scottsdale dance spot, the Chances Are Restaurant.



KATE NOLAN

When Blakemore, who turns 79 on Oct. 1, gets breathless after rocking around the dance floor, she usually blames her favorite jitterbug partner.

Recently, though, the Scottsdale resident's home-monitoring kit pointed the finger of blame elsewhere.

Blakemore's heart rate was racing, climbing a few points each time she measured it — 137, 140, 144 — even though she had no physical sense of the acceleration.

After calling her doctor, Blakemore was ordered to the emergency department at Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn, where she was about to make history.

On Sept. 16, a new one-armed robot named Hansen came to Blakemore's rescue, and she became a medical first, at least for Arizona.

"She had a fast heart arrhythmia and we needed to do an ablation," said Dr. Vijay Swarup, the electro-physiologist who treated Blakemore.

About 2.2 million Americans a year suffer from arrhythmia. Annually, Swarup performs hundreds of radio-

Hansen Medical Sensei robot

What: A robot that removes heart tissue that causes abnormal heart rhythms, a source of heart failure.

Cost: \$650,000.

Advantages: Assures that only the proper amount of abnormal tissue is destroyed; reduces radiation exposure to patients and staff; decreases procedure time.

Where: Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn recently acquired Arizona's first Hansen robot.

Details: www.shc.org.

frequency ablations to destroy abnormal tissue that causes the irregular heartbeats. Electro-physiologists specialize in treating abnormal heart rhythms, which can lead to heart failure.

Typically, the solution would be for Swarup to insert a tube through a vein in the patient's groin into a heart chamber, then manually position a tool to burn off the offending heart tissue.

But for Blakemore's surgery, it would be different.

Swarup recently became the first Arizona physician trained on the \$650,000 Hansen Medical Sensei Robotic Catheter System.

Scottsdale Healthcare this year acquired Arizona's first Hansen, its second robot.

The hospital acquired Arizona's

Robo-surgeon makes heart beat fonder in Scottsdale

ABLATION

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first daVinci robot in 2002 to be used primarily for gynecological and prostate surgery. By now, a dozen of those two-armed surgeon-droids have invaded the Valley.

The Hansen, developed by some of the same scientists who created the daVinci, has a more specific use: precision targeting of heart tissue with reduced risk of complication. It employs a three-dimensional mapping system that Swarup likens to a GPS.

In practice, a narrow metal tube extrudes from the robotic arm and is threaded through a vein into the patient's heart; it sends back images of the heart's interior.

The doctor sits at a console using a joystick and tracking ball to guide the burning tool. The radio-frequency heat can target areas measured in millimeters.

The procedure is 10 times as precise

as manipulating the tool manually, Swarup said.

"It is more accurate, has less risk of complication and allows the doctor to work more comfortably," Swarup said.

Otherwise, doctors can stand bent over the patient for hours. It's also faster and reduces radiation exposure to the patient and the medical team.

Swarup, who calls himself an early adopter because he likes "to play with the latest technology," predicts the Hansen will do most ablations within 10 years.

It is now being used for more complicated procedures of the upper heart chambers, the most common sites for ablation.

Blakemore continues to recover.

"When they called and told me I would be Number 1 in the state, I said fine. I had no second thoughts, really," she said.

While the doctor told her not to run any marathons, Blakemore said she'll be at the Chances Are on Sunday.