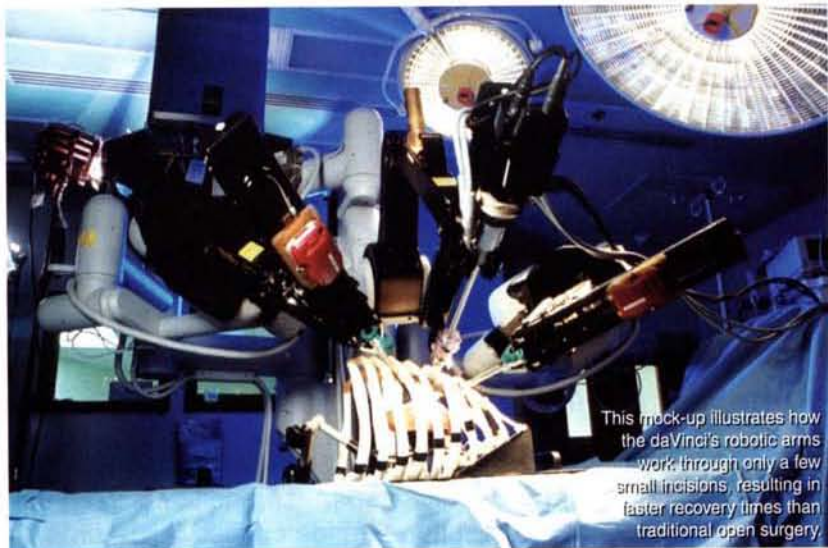


daVinci Mode

Scottsdale Healthcare Takes Lead in Robotic Surgery

By Kimberly Hundley



This mock-up illustrates how the daVinci's robotic arms work through only a few small incisions, resulting in faster recovery times than traditional open surgery.

A FOUR-ARMED, scalpel-wielding robot sounded like the stuff of sci-fi movies back in 2001 when Scottsdale Healthcare became the first hospital in Arizona to invest in the daVinci surgical system.

Flash forward eight years, and lots of Valley medical facilities have acquired a robot of their own. Practical knowledge, however, simply isn't on store shelves.

"Scottsdale Healthcare easily has the broadest experience with the daVinci, not only in terms of procedures done, but in number of surgeons using it. Many other hospitals have a robot, and practitioners aren't using it much at all," says urologist Dr. Bernie Gburek, who did the first robot-assisted prostatectomy in Arizona at Scottsdale Healthcare's Shea campus in 2002.

The 'daVinci' name is dressed to impress—a reference to genius artist and inventor Leonardo. But what does the robot-assisted surgery mean to patients?

Quicker recovery, less trauma and better results, says Gburek, explaining that the daVinci takes minimally invasive surgery to another level. Because surgeons make only a few dime-sized incisions and move precisely inside the body, patients recover faster and with less pain.

Instead of a four-day hospital stay, for example, patients usually go home within 24 hours. Recovery takes one to two weeks vs. four to six with traditional open surgery. "It's a huge benefit to the patient," says Dr. Mike Janicek, a gynecologist who's danced with daVinci in the OR hundreds of times at Scottsdale Healthcare. "We're doing a better surgery and the patient has a better recovery. The way I look at it, we're getting the best of both worlds."

Not all procedures are a good match for daVinci. Scottsdale Healthcare now has three of the robotic systems at its Thompson Peak and Shea hospitals, which are regularly used in urology, gynecology, GYN oncology, colo-rectal and general surgery procedures.

Robot Deconstructed

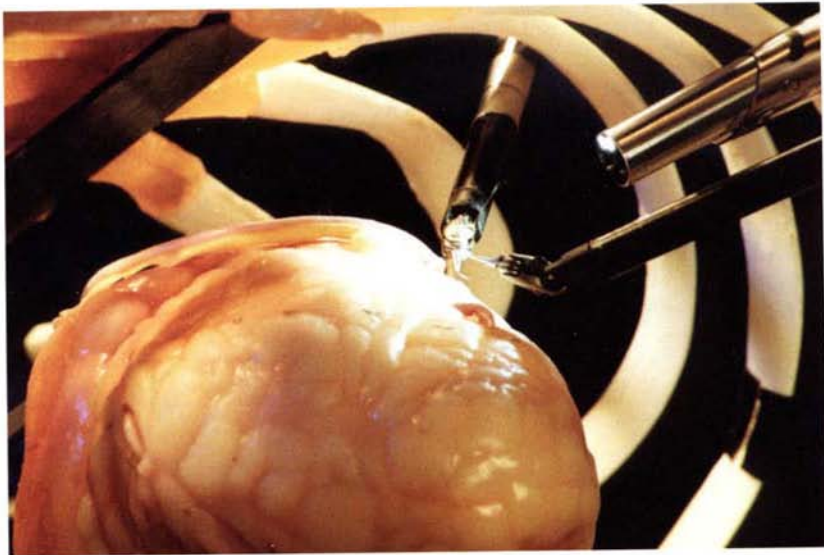
Patients who learn they'll be getting the daVinci treatment understandably have a few questions. "It's hard to explain," says Janicek. "I tell them it's the difference between operating with chopsticks and your arms and fingers." The robot may look like a refrigerator-sized console with an eyepiece, but inside, the surgeon slips his fingertips into grips that connect to instruments with pulleys and cables that bend, turn and twist—just like a person's fingers and wrists. Regular laparoscopy instruments, on the other hand, are long and rigid.

Performing surgery the daVinci way is flat-out addicting, say both surgeons. "It's one of those things that once you do it, you can't go back," says Janicek. "It took me a year to embrace it. Whenever you don't understand something, it can be intimidating; you have to learn the technology ... But until you've tried it, you can't knock it."

The robot also gives surgeons enhanced depth perception during surgery. "It's like you're inside the patient in three dimensions," says Janicek. "You can see smaller blood vessels and everything in finer detail."

Janicek, who specializes in gynecologic oncology, says patients who believe they may be candidates should research the procedures for which the daVinci is indicated. "In my specialty, if you're not doing it [performing daVinci surgery], you're falling behind the times," he says. A good doctor will determine if a person's medical situation is a good fit, he adds. Simple hysterectomies, for instance, require classic laparoscopic surgery.

Gburek, who has also completed hundreds of robot-assisted surgeries at Scottsdale Healthcare, says the dexterity of the daVinci has opened up a range of complex surgical interventions to minimally invasive approaches. Because using the daVinci has become part of Scottsdale Healthcare's



Surgeons using the daVinci manipulate articulated, computer-controlled instruments visualized through 3-D high definition magnification, as shown in this training model.

medical culture, more surgeons are exploring new ways to use the technology—and they're sharing their professional insights with one another.

"It's really helped the whole system grow in their experience and expertise," Gburek

says. "It's moved everything forward a whole order of magnitude." ■

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