



by Mary Jo Montanarella, MD

Let's be frank! No one is enamored with the idea of undergoing surgery (surgeon excluded). Just the thought of surgery may precipitate fear and anxiety. But thanks to the ongoing dedication and pioneering work of savvy engineers, designers and marketing experts, we now have alternatives to traditional "open" surgical procedures. Over the past three decades, there has been a powerful ongoing movement toward minimally invasive surgeries that allow patients to recover in less time and to return to normal active lifestyles. This current trend is possible with evolving video based "telescopic" surgery called laparoscopy. Related to this development has been the advent of the daVinci® robotic surgical systems, allowing for advanced surgeries through small dime size surgical incisions.

Utilizing the daVinci® approach to laparoscopy can afford many surgical advantages over classic laparoscopy. Unlike "stick" type laparoscopy, the daVinci® laparoscopy set up is different. The robot actually holds the surgical instruments that are placed into the body. The surgeon sits comfortably at the surgical console alongside the patient and uses the instruments at the console to guide the robot for the surgical procedure. The surgical instruments are under the precise fingertip control of the surgeon's hands, yet the instability of the human hand and the fatigue from standing are not present.

The advantages of the daVinci® system include:

- 1) Superior 3D visualization afforded by the 3 channel vision system, a high resolution 3D image and a more panoramic view of the entire surgical field.
- 2) The operator's enhanced dexterity, precision and control is afforded by four robotic arms allowing for solo surgery, fingertip control of the surgical instruments, and elimination of the tremor of the surgeon's hand.
- 3) The daVinci® ergonomics allow for exact alignment of the visual

and the motor axes, along with high resolution stereo viewing and comfortable seated posture.

For my patients, the daVinci® system has been very useful in the field of gynecology. The most widespread usage has been for hysterectomies for benign fibroid tumors of the uterus, gynecologic cancers and surgical staging, endometriosis and pelvic prolapse surgery. In the United States, over 600,000 hysterectomies are performed annually. By the age of 65, one in three women have already undergone a hysterectomy generally for noncancerous reasons. Only 38% of these procedures were performed in a minimally invasive manner. With advancing technology and surgical expertise, this represents an enormous opportunity for women to undergo their surgery with less recovery and quicker return to normal daily activities.

So, with all this advanced technology, one may wonder as I first did, what is the advantage or benefit for the patient who is faced with idea of undergoing surgery? I was impressed that the patients, with very few exceptions, seem to have the same experience. The patient operative blood loss is often minimal and at times about that of a tablespoon or two. Also, less tissue trauma and more precise dissection result in less postoperative pain. In terms of cosmetic results, most patients have very little scarring from 4 to 6 dime size incisions on their abdomen. For some patients, they may utilize just a few days of narcotics followed by ibuprofen rather than using pain medication for weeks at a time. Many patients return to work after two weeks instead of missing the standard six weeks from work and quickly return to normal activity in a fraction of the time. More and more patients are learning that the daVinci® approach to surgery is rapidly developing into a most effective and least invasive surgical option for gynecologic patients. I am pleased as a surgeon to be able to offer women today a more palatable approach to surgery at Elliot Hospital with a shorter recovery and return to one's daily routine. For more information on daVinci® surgery one can visit the website www.davincisurgery.com.



Dr. Montanarella, a native upstate New Yorker, is a Board Certified OB/GYN. She received her BS in chemistry summa cum laude and trained at University of Rochester School of Medicine. Her multiple areas of interests include obstetrics, gynecology, laparoscopic robotic surgery, infertility, and women's health. She is founder and owner of her own private practice in Manchester, Dr. Montanarella & Associates, PA, 624-1638.

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