

Minimally invasive surgery gets patients back to normal faster

Rosemary Bowers of Cedar Rapids calls the da Vinci Surgical System at St. Luke's 'amazing technology.' The 68-year-old would know – she underwent surgery via the da Vinci in April. A short time later she was back to her regular walking routine.

"I put off surgery for as long as possible," said Bowers. "But it got to the point where I was uncomfortable and experiencing some cramping. So I talked to my doctor."

Bowers is a patient of Jerry Rozeboom, MD, at OB-GYN Associates, PC. Dr. Rozeboom had talked with Bowers about the issue before, yet, this time, decided it was the right time to correct the problem.

"I explained to Rosemary what her options were, but recommended hysterectomy surgery with the da Vinci Surgical System at St. Luke's Hospital," said Dr. Rozeboom.

special laparoscopic surgical instruments, which are inserted into the patient through several tiny incisions. The doctor is seated at the console, which is located several feet away from the operating table. At the console, the doctor moves the hand controls, which in turn move the robotic arms and perform the surgery.

"The technology is quite remarkable," said Dr. Rozeboom. "But I am the one performing the surgery, not the robot. It can't make decisions on its own."

How it works

The console is equipped with a viewer for the doctor to look inside the patient. The images are coming from a tiny 3-D camera. It is inserted inside the patient along with the surgical instruments.

"The da Vinci has become my first choice for surgery," said Dr. Rozeboom. "I think

the da Vinci is far better compared to traditional methods. The da Vinci is minimally invasive surgery (MIS), which is performed through dime-sized incisions. This is in contrast to the

much larger incisions used in traditional, open surgery, which are often as large as 6 to 12 inches long."

The smaller incisions used in MIS typically enable shorter recovery times and result in

a shorter hospital stay, less pain, less risk of infection, less scarring and a quicker return to normal activities.

"The da Vinci is a miraculous thing," said Bowers. "I've talked to some women who had this done years ago the traditional way and they had a big incision and had to lie around for days recovering in a lot of pain. As far as I am concerned this is the way to go because it's minimally invasive. It's a milestone."

Iowa's robotic leader

St. Luke's acquired its first surgical robot in the fall of 2005 and is currently designated by Intuitive, the maker of da Vinci, as Iowa's robotic leader. This designation means St. Luke's has performed more robot-assisted procedures than any other hospital in the state. To date, there have been well over 300 surgeries with the da Vinci at St. Luke's.

In June, St. Luke's added a second da Vinci Surgical System. The second da Vinci was purchased by St. Luke's Health Care Foundation thanks to a large unrestricted endowment left by Arthur and Leota Gossard in 1995. Mrs. Gossard was a longtime St. Luke's volunteer and St. Luke's Auxiliary member.

"St. Luke's is the busiest robotic hospital in the state and probably one of the busiest in the Midwest," said Dr. Rozeboom. "Our scheduling was limited with one robot and adding an additional da Vinci Surgical System was necessary to accommodate the need."

Rosemary Bowers enjoys playing a game with her grandchildren Logan, Madison and Brendon.



Faster recovery

On April 14, Dr. Rozeboom performed a hysterectomy with the da Vinci. Bowers' surgery lasted a few hours.

"Most people can go home the same day of surgery, but there was something off with my blood count that Dr. Rozeboom wanted to keep an eye on," said Bowers. "So I stayed in a private hospital room for two days. The care I had at St. Luke's was amazing from the nurses to the housekeeping staff. It was a great stay; in fact I didn't want to go home."

When Bowers did go home, she didn't experience any pain and the only restrictions she had was not to lift anything heavier than a milk jug and limit physical activity for the first week or two.

"Some of my patients are very motivated," said Dr. Rozeboom. "I've had a couple of patients back to their jogging and power

walking within a week. Most patients return to work in one to two weeks after surgery. The da Vinci is truly one of the greatest advances in surgery that I have seen in my 20-some years of practicing medicine. It is my choice for surgery and if my wife needed a hysterectomy and it wouldn't be an easy vaginal hysterectomy then I would tell her the da Vinci is the way to go."

"I was back to taking my daily walks in no time," said Bowers. "I'm so glad I went through with the surgery – I honestly feel like a different person."

■ **To watch a video of the da Vinci surgical robot or learn more about minimally invasive surgery at St. Luke's log on to stlukescr.org.**

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The da Vinci surgical robot allows a doctor to use a special console with hand and foot controls to move the robotic arms. Attached to the robotic arms are

Robot-assisted surgery

The da Vinci is based on a system developed in the 1980s for the U.S. Department of Defense, which wanted a remote-control system for treating battlefield casualties. It gained approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2000 and today there are 946 da Vinci Surgical Systems installed at hospitals worldwide.

Last year, the da Vinci performed 85,000 surgeries worldwide. Of those surgeries, 55,000 were to remove cancerous prostates. At St. Luke's the da Vinci is used mainly for urological and gynecological procedures. It also has FDA approval for several cardiac, thoracic and general surgery procedures.