From left, Justin Klaassen, DO, Dwane Beckenhauer, MD, and Jake Breeding, MD, of Salina Regional Surgical Associates.

ROBOTIC REVOLUTION

da Vinci surgical system expands to general surgery

BY JOHN BERGGREN

Patients undergoing da Vinci robot-assisted prostatectomies and hysterectomies at Salina Regional Health Center have sung the praises of the latest in minimally invasive surgical technology for years. Now even more are benefiting, as general surgeons at Salina Regional Surgical Associates began using the da Vinci system earlier this year.

"We've all seen the benefits of da Vinci and we think it's the wave of the future," says Jake Breeding, MD, general surgeon at Salina Regional Surgical Associates. "In the cases we've had, patients have done exceedingly well and had quick returns to their normal activity.

"Robotic surgery is just another tool we can offer in addition to laparoscopic and open procedures," Breeding says. "There are many things we have to take into consideration, like a patient's size, condition and goals for recovery. We can help patients decide which is the best option for them."

WHO QUALIFIES FOR da VINCI SURGERY?

Patients needing gallbladder, spleen, anti-reflux and colon surgery may be candidates for da Vinci when the procedures are elective in nature. Patients with more urgent cases are better candidates for laparoscopic and open techniques.

"Setting up a procedure with da Vinci takes significantly more time," Breeding says. "When someone is really sick, laparoscopic and open procedures can be done much more quickly."

HOW DOES IT WORK?

With da Vinci, doctors use four or five small incisions, each half an inch or smaller, versus one large incision along the abdomen required for an open procedure. Instruments are placed inside the patient and connected to the robotic arms of the da Vinci surgical system. The surgeon then sits at a computer console where a highly magnified 3-D view allows a clear look at the surgical field, while hand and foot controls are used to manipulate the instruments.

"Many patients think it sounds complicated, but when we explain that we control every movement and that we have incredible visualization for the procedure and can make more intricate motions and perform more delicate surgery, they think it sounds like a good idea," Breeding says.

The precision of the technology allows for less blood loss and scarring, which translates to significantly less pain, less chance for infection, shorter hospital stays and quicker recovery times. These benefits may be even greater for larger patients.

"Research has shown robot-assisted surgery is clearly superior to open techniques and is neck-and-neck or slightly superior than some laparoscopic cases," Breeding says. "Many can benefit from the use of robotic technology, but we can't say it will be the right choice for everyone."

Jake Breeding, MD, sits at the computer console used to control and visualize surgeries using da Vinci.

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