

# West Sub docs love their robots

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When Diana Concannon, 48, began experiencing pain in her pelvis she worried it might be related to cancer. So the mother of two made an appointment with her primary care physician for a check in, and soon enough she was undergoing a diagnostic ultrasound that showed fibrous tumors in her uterus and a large cyst on her left ovary.

Needing now to see a specialist, Concannon made an appointment with Dr. Monique Brotman, one of four robotically-trained gynecologists here who perform complicated general surgery procedures with the assistance of the \$2 million da Vinci Robotic Surgical System at West Suburban Medical Center.

"I was scared at first about the tumors, but Dr. Brotman did the test prior to the surgery, and called me with the good news that they were benign prior to the having them taken out," says the Elmwood Park resident.

Concannon says her surgery was quick and the hospital stay was short.

"If Diana had come to me two-and-a-half-years ago, I would have performed her hysterectomy as an open surgical procedure. She would have stayed three to four days in the hospital and spent six to eight weeks recuperating at home" says Brotman. "Since being trained initially in robotic surgery and having undergone advanced robotic training, I can offer a minimally invasive procedure to patients who normally would have only had the option for a traditional open surgery. This translates to less pain for patients and a much shorter recovery time. Diana was home within 24 hours, and was watching a 4th of July parade two days later.

To date, West Sub urologist, Dr. Alan Sadah, the co-director of the Robotic Minimally Invasive Surgery department, says "the majority of the robotic procedures

*Chosen as 'epicenter' for teaching docs  
how to use technology*



Photos/Kevin McCarey

Dr. Alan Sadah and Dr. Monique Brotman.



Tiesenga, chair of surgery and director of the robotic surgery team.

In October 2013, Tiesenga says the medical center became a designated national robotic epicenter for general surgery training, making it one of only 12 such robotic epicenters for general surgery in the nation.

"The epicenter designation also means that West Suburban is now a nationally recognized teaching center specifically for robotic general surgery, [in that] the epicenter refers to the surgeon, which is me, and the hospital, West Sub," says Tiesenga.

Currently, at West Sub, eight staff surgeons are trained to utilize the da Vinci robot for general surgery procedures in their operating room, often with other doctors and nurses observing the robotic procedures.

"The robotic teaching epicenter has really put West Suburban Medical Center on the map nationally, and not only is West Suburban being recognized for

its great robotics program, but now for its operating room, too, because of the great efficiency that the robot has enabled the surgeons to realize in the operating room," says Tiesenga. "Typically operating rooms are very slow when they add a robot, because it is so complex. But West Suburban has been able to put their best people in the room, and make the operations move very efficiently, so much so that we have had other robotic programs out there come in to observe how we are able to do it, which I think is a big thing for our OR to achieve."

Tiesenga uses the robot to perform single site, gallbladder surgeries, where he can achieve a scarless surgery.

"We go in through the belly button, and have much better visualization because we use something called 'Fire Fly,'" he says. "Fire Fly is a radio-nuclear dye that is injected into the blood. It causes the ducts to glow. So, in the anatomy, for a surgeon, it acts as kind of a GPS to follow when you are operating, and with the robot, we can do these operations more accurately, with better vision."

Likewise, Dr. Sadah notes that robotic surgery is a good option for many of his patients.

Depending on a surgeon's subspecialty, Sadah says, "Procedures that have traditionally been performed, for example, with the laparoscope, invented in the late 1980s and started in early 1990s, such as gallbladder surgery, appendix, hysterectomy, etc., now, while they don't have to be done robotically, they can be done using the robot...with a similar outcome as laparoscopic technique in terms of pain, cosmetic outcome and recovery."

Meanwhile, post hysterectomy, Concannon says she is healing nicely.

"Me having a robotically-assisted surgery is an option Dr. Brotman and I discussed together, and all I can say is that it was quick and less painful because the incision was smaller," says Concannon.

done globally and in the USA are done by the urologists and gynecologists, doing prostatectomy, partial and complete nephrectomy by the urologist and hysterectomy by the gynecologist," he said in a written response.

Brotman says she uses the robotic technology to perform 75 to 80 percent of her gynecologic surgeries, adding, "The precision of the instrumentation has dramatically improved the face of surgery."

"The technology is amazing," says Brotman.

## The future of medicine

The first robotic surgery at West Sub was performed on Sept. 4, 2012, by Dr. Frederick