



Faster recovery, less pain

Prostate surgery is less invasive with innovative robotic technology.

Prostate cancer is the second most prevalent cancer in men after skin cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death after lung cancer. Considering that one in six American men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime, men of Central Texas and their families need to know about treatment solutions that not only cure the disease, but also provide for the quickest possible return to normal daily functions. Scott & White is helping patients do that through such medical innovations as robotic prostate surgery.

“When I found out I had prostate cancer, my wife and I immediately started researching my options for treatment and surgery,” says Donald Tillman, who lives in Temple and recently retired from military duty. The couple looked to Scott & White, a leader in robotic surgery with a highly

trained director at the helm, Kristofer R. Wagner, MD, director of Robotic Surgery, Scott & White Healthcare; and assistant professor of Surgery, Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine.

“We found out about the new robotics and laparoscopy and were eager to take advantage of the benefits of the quicker recovery and less pain,” Mr. Tillman says. “A friend of mine had undergone the procedure and highly recommended Dr. Wagner.” Mr. Tillman had his surgery within three weeks of meeting him.

“Everything Dr. Wagner said would happen, did,” says Mr. Tillman, who affirms that his return to normal daily life was quick. “Thanks to Scott & White, and Dr. Wagner, I’m doing what I love again. I’m watching my son play football for the Chicago Bears, spending time with my

→ Faster recovery, less pain continued



Patrick S. Lowry, MD, section head, Laparoscopy and Endourology, Scott & White Healthcare and Kristofer R. Wagner, MD, director of Robotic Surgery, Scott & White Healthcare work as a team to perform minimally invasive prostate surgery.

beautiful wife, Renee, and enjoying our family and our new life, together.”

Technology and Training Enhance Patient Care

As part of its mission to offer the best medical advancements and to better serve patients such as Mr. Tillman, who face prostate surgery, in 2005 Scott & White purchased the daVinci® robotic surgery equipment, manufactured by Intuitive Surgical, Inc.

“Training the clinical team on the robotic technology was helped by the fact that one of the operating rooms at the main

hospital campus in Temple was designated for the procedure,” says Patrick S. Lowry, MD, section head, Laparoscopy and Endourology, Scott & White Healthcare; and assistant professor of Surgery, Texas A&M Health Science Center of Medicine. “It became very exciting in part because our team is able to use the technology in a familiar environment. The Division of Urology also appreciates having strong support from Scott & White leadership, who facilitated the financing of the new technology.”

Following a yearlong fellowship at George Washington University Hospital in

Endourology, Laparoscopy and Robotic Surgery, Dr. Wagner returned to Scott & White in 2007 and joined forces with Lowry to offer the laparoscopic robotic procedure.

“We are part of a well-trained team offering a continuum of care,” Dr. Lowry says. “It spans patient preparation and the actual procedure to hospital care, at-home recovery and rehabilitation for return to normal daily activities as quickly as possible.”

Robotic Procedure Eases Recovery Experience

One concern patients have when they consider robotic laparoscopy is that their surgery will be performed by a robot. “That’s not the case,” Dr. Wagner says. “The robotic instruments we use cannot move without our command. All actions are initiated by the surgeons, who are alongside the patient every step of the way. The beauty of this technology is that the robotic functionality is so much more precise than human movement. This helps spare the nerves needed for restoring normal functionality.”

Removing the prostate is complicated, considering that it is about the size of a walnut and, surrounded by nerves, is located deep inside the pelvis in between and connected to other organs, including the urethra and bladder. While the two methods—traditional and robot-assisted laparoscopic—have virtually the same rate of success in controlling cancer, the big differences are in how the procedures are performed.

Radical prostatectomy, or removal of the prostate gland, traditionally has been performed by making a 6- to 10-inch incision in the lower abdomen to remove the cancerous gland. Robotic laparoscopy enables the removal of the prostate through five small incisions, each five to 12 millimeters in the lower abdomen. This results in less blood loss during the procedure, less pain and a shorter recovery time.

“Dr. Lowry and I assist one another,” Dr. Wagner says. “One of us sits at the console looking at the images from the camera and commanding the robotic instruments, while the other is at the patient’s side overseeing that all is going as it should.”

The Future Holds Promise

The collaborative environment at Scott & White encourages working across all medical and surgical specialty areas to introduce innovative technology and procedures to benefit all patients.

Scott & White’s investment and success with robotic laparoscopy is also being used for areas outside the Division of Urology. “Any type of surgical procedure that requires precise maneuvers in a narrow space is a candidate for robotic laparoscopy,” Dr. Wagner says. “Besides prostatectomies, we have used the technology for bladder and kidney surgeries. We also have been working with our colleagues in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology to explore best uses of the technology for necessary hysterectomies and other female pelvic surgeries.” ■

Prostate cancer clinical trials

Dr. Wagner cites Scott & White’s various research projects, including multicenter clinical trials, Federal Drug Administration studies, pharmaceutical company investigations and regional cancer studies by the Southwest Oncology Group. “We have a Phase I FDA clinical trial that is testing a new injected prostatic biotoxin for cancer control. Also, there is a pharmaceutical trial with a drug called Denosumab for metastatic prostate cancer and a new surgical technique being tested for reconstruction of the bladder and urethra,” he says.

Prostate cancer and early detection

Scott & White’s recommendations for prostate cancer screening are consistent with those of the American Cancer Society. All males 50 years and older should be screened once a year as part of their annual well-check. African American males and males with a father or brother who has had prostate cancer should be screened annually starting at age 40.

FREE Prostate screenings at Scott & White

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. Scott & White will offer free Prostate Specific Antigen screenings (blood tests) at the Scott & White Cancer Center in Temple. This test is offered to men who do not have health insurance.

For more information call
254-724-1053

Glenda Tanner Vasicek Cancer Treatment Center opens this summer

Consolidating care in one location, the Scott & White Glenda Tanner Vasicek Cancer Center opens this summer with the completion of the first phase of construction. Made possible by more than \$12 million raised through donations, the Center is 45,000 square feet of space designed to give cancer patients and their families more ease and comfort during treatments.

At Scott & White, approximately 2,000 new cases of cancer are diagnosed each year with more than 16,000 patients undergoing some form of cancer treatment annually. In addition to philanthropic funds, Scott & White received an outpouring of support from almost 2,000 individuals, corporations and foundations to fund the Center’s construction. Phase II is scheduled to be completed in the first quarter of 2009.