



The new high-tech da Vinci Xi robotic surgery system is helping to make surgery at Dignity Health - Mercy Medical Center even more precise and better for patients.

Ibrahim Azer, MD with the Dignity Health Medical Group - Merced is one of the surgeons who uses this system. Here he answers some common questions about this state-of-the-art system.

Q: How does the robotic system work?

A lot of people think the da Vinci robot does the surgery by itself - it does not. It helps the surgeon perform minimally invasive surgery. The robot has arms to which we attach small instruments, like cutting and cauterizing tools and a camera. To perform surgery, we control these instruments from a console in the operating room.

Q: What surgeries is it used for at Dignity Health - Mercy Medical Center?

Robotic-assisted surgery has many uses. Currently, we use it for colon, small bowel, hernia, gallbladder, and acid reflux disease surgeries. But I expect we will add prostate, gynecological, urological, kidney, and other surgeries in the future.

Q: What are the advantages of the da Vinci robot to the patient and to the surgeon?

Robotic surgery can have many patient benefits compared to traditional open surgery and laparoscopic surgery.

For some types of surgery, there may be less blood loss, faster healing, and less pain after the surgery. Unlike a handheld surgical camera, the robot's 3-D camera is not subjected to unwanted motion. So it's easier to see what we're working on.

The robot's movements are also very precise. This makes it easier to perform difficult surgeries in narrow spaces, like the pelvic area.

All of this may help reduce complications and make surgery safer for patients. Robotic surgery also reduces fatigue for the surgeon. We are seated and relaxed at the console instead of standing for the operation.