

Robotic Surgery

Combining Innovation with Individualized Care

By Chris Haubert



When an operating room team at Salinas Valley Health recently completed its first procedure using the latest available robotic surgery system, it marked a significant achievement for our patients, staff and community. In an era characterized by rapid innovation, the integration of increasingly sophisticated robotic surgery has become a game-changer in healthcare. Newer and better platforms are revolutionizing the way procedures are done and medical centers that invest in this kind of technology see a three-fold benefit: expanded surgical capabilities, improved patient outcomes, and enhanced operational efficiencies.

The Da Vinci® 5 (dV5) robot features 3D high-definition visualization, providing a crystal-clear magnified view of the surgical site. Its groundbreaking technology allows the surgeon to feel resistance or tension – a capability not found in earlier da Vinci robotic surgical systems. With multiple arms, the dV5 enables surgeons to manipulate instruments in ways that are impossible

with the human hand alone. Additionally, ergonomic improvements reduce surgeon fatigue during lengthy procedures.

Numerous Benefits in Value-Based Care

“Robotic-assisted surgery offers numerous benefits for patients, combining enhanced precision and surgical efficiency with significantly reduced trauma to the body,” explains Tarun Bajaj, MD, who conducted the first surgery with the dV5 in late December. “The minimally invasive approach results in smaller incisions, leading to less scarring, reduced blood loss, and lower risk of infections or need for transfusions. Patients typically experience less post-operative pain and enjoy shorter stays, ultimately enabling them to recover more quickly and return to their daily activities sooner than with traditional surgical methods.”

Salinas Valley Health was the first healthcare system in Monterey County to receive the dV5. As a public district healthcare system run by the community,

for the community, this investment expands the medical center’s surgical capabilities and attracts highly skilled professionals eager to work with the best available tools.

“By incorporating systems like these, Salinas Valley Health positions itself as a cutting-edge facility, helping recruit and retain top surgical talent who want to serve in a healthcare environment focused on innovation,” says Bajaj.

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An Investment Demonstrating Commitment

While the initial investment is substantial, long-term financial benefits often outweigh the cost. Enhanced outcomes can reduce the length of patient stays, which with value-based care initiatives aimed at improving quality while controlling costs. As Aisha Huebner, Director of Perioperative Services at Salinas Valley Health, explains, “With fewer complications and readmissions, we can elevate patient care and improve our bottom line.”

Huebner, who previously served at AdventHealth system in Colorado, was pleasantly surprised when she learned about the high-level technology used by the medical center. “It demonstrates a true commitment to advanced surgical care,” she says.

The da Vinci system is versatile, enabling a wide range of surgical procedures across various specialties, including urology, gynecology, gynecologic oncology, urogynecology, and general surgery among



others. Although robotic surgery has been commonplace for two-plus decades, this newest evolution, the dV5, exemplifies the future of surgery – seamlessly merging technology with clinical expertise to provide the best care possible.

Distinct Advantages of the Latest Model

How does it work? The surgeon programs the robot, gets the arms in place, scrubs out and then sits inside the console where they can move the robot's arms close to the area of concern. Bajaj, who has been serving patients at Salinas Valley Health for more than a decade, has worked with earlier iterations of robotic surgery systems and sees distinct advantages in the dV5 model.

One of the main improvements, he says, is the haptic feedback feature. Haptic is derived from a Greek word meaning, “to touch.” Haptic feedback allows surgeons to “feel” the tissue they are manipulating by providing tactile sensations through the

surgical console – similar to the feedback experienced in video games. This feature bridges the gap between robotic instruments and the surgeon's hands, providing a more natural sense of touch.

“Another primary advantage is that I can adjust the control settings from inside the console during surgery rather than having to stop to make adjustments,” explains Bajaj.

Long-Held Values Support a Bright Future
Future robotic surgery systems, Bajaj says, will be able to integrate patient images.

“When a CT (computed tomography) indicates a tumor's location, the screen will display it in a different color, allowing the surgeon to identify it precisely without searching.”

Since 1953, Salinas Valley Health has been at the forefront of providing quality care, close to home. A highly skilled physician and staff team is foundational to the national recognition regularly received for patient

safety and outcomes. Access to leading-edge technology adds to that advantage, building a vibrant healthcare environment that combines innovation with personal attention. [cs](#)