

Robotic Surgery ‘Wonderful’ For Cancer Patient

by Dave Whaley

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ALTON— Sherri Enlow has had more than her share of surgeries in her life, but the procedure she had done at Alton Memorial Hospital in September was the smoothest one yet.

Enlow, 62, of Wood River underwent a partial nephrectomy for renal cell carcinoma last fall, with Dr. Arjun Sivaraman doing the procedure using the robotic da Vinci X Surgical System that AMH began using in January 2020.

“It was wonderful,” said Enlow, whose only limitations for a few days following the surgery were not to lift anything heavier than a gallon of milk. “It was a little odd at first because Dr. Sivaraman walked across the room when the surgery was about to start. They pointed to this robot that was going to do the work. But there was a lot less pain after the surgery than I had with any previous surgeries. I was home the next day and I’ve felt great since then.”

Enlow said she had an MRI after experiencing lower back pain in August, which is when the spot on her kidney was discovered. Then it was just a matter of scheduling the surgery with Dr. Sivaraman, a urologist with Washington University Physicians of Illinois Inc.

“Sherri was very appreciative that we did the surgery at AMH rather than having to travel to St. Louis,” Dr. Sivaraman said. “It was a centrally located renal mass very close to the renal vein. It was a challenging surgery to avoid vein injury and prevent removal of the whole kidney. But we were able to remove the tumor only and preserve the kidney. The final pathology was renal cell cancer with negative margins. “

Enlow was most pleased that she doesn’t have to go back for a follow-up until April.



“It was a wonderful experience with Dr. Sivaraman,” she said. “I would recommend (robotic surgery) for anyone who can have it done that way.”

For the patient, the main advantages of robotics surgery are a decrease in post-operative pain, less use of potentially addictive narcotics, less bleeding and a quicker recovery time. The surgeon is at a console in the operating room, with a patient cart and a video tower where the rest of the surgery team can see what the surgeon is doing and assist.

“The da Vinci surgical system means that access to minimally invasive procedures is increased,” says Dr. Christopher Aldridge of Alton Surgery, a general surgeon who has also done many robotics procedures at AMH. “The technology allows operations that once required a large incision to be done using smaller ports, similar to conventional laparoscopy. The robot translates the surgeon’s movements through a variety of wristed instruments with greatly improved binocular visualization.”

For more information, call Alton Surgery at 618-462-3191, or Washington University Physicians of Illinois Inc. Urologists at 618-463-7174.