

Barton docs using state-of-the-art device during surgery

By Rebecca Wass

Same outcome, but without being so invasive. That is one of the overriding benefits of the da Vinci Si Surgical System.

Scott Welker this month performed his first single-incision cholecystectomy (surgical removal of the gallbladder) with the da Vinci at Barton Memorial Hospital.

“With all of the added benefits of less pain, less blood loss, shorter hospital stays and a reduced risk of infections, the single-incision allows us to do cholecystectomies via one incision in the umbilicus [navel], which is nearly invisible after it heals,” Welker said.



Kelly Shanahan is the next doctor who will be using the da Vinci on patients.
Photo/Rebecca Wass

The hospital joined 114 medical facilities in California and more than 1,500 healthcare facilities in the United States by

purchasing the da Vinci Si Surgical System to meet the surgical needs of its region. Barton Memorial is the third hospital in California to offer single-incision da Vinci gallbladder surgery. The others are UC Davis Medical Center and UC San Diego Medical Center.

The da Vinci Si Surgical System has become widely known as an effective alternative to traditional open surgery and conventional minimally invasive laparoscopy. Approximately

360,000 da Vinci procedures were performed in 2011 around the world.

“The da Vinci is the most advanced form of minimally invasive surgery available,” said Gary Willen, Tahoe Women’s Care gynecologist.

Willen has practiced at Barton Memorial Hospital for nearly 30 years and is a pioneer of minimally invasive surgery, including laparoscopic hysterectomies. With the da Vinci system, Willen is able to perform complex hysterectomies and other urologic and gynecologic procedures.

“At Barton, we’ve been doing laparoscopic surgeries for a long time,” Willen said. “The da Vinci allows us to perform surgery on some of the most difficult cases. This is not only an innovative option for gynecological and general surgical procedures, but an opportunity for Barton to offer the best technologically advanced care for patients, which is not typical for a small community.”

During a da Vinci surgical procedure, the surgeon sits at a control console near the patient, and an assisting physician is at the patient’s bedside. The surgeon sees the operative field through a video monitor and is able to manually control several robotic arms that replicate every movement of the surgeon’s hands.

In addition to single-incision gallbladder surgery, Welker

also specializes in da Vinci surgical procedures made through multiple small incisions, such as hernia repair, anti-reflux, colon and stomach surgery, and other advanced procedures.

Recently added to the da Vinci surgical team was gynecologist Kelly Shanahan from Emerald Bay Center for Women's Health. Shanahan will be performing hysterectomies and other complex gynecologic procedures. Drs. Michael Enrico, Gregory Eyre, Kris Kobalter and Caroline Habaradas are the next physicians to be trained on this latest piece of innovative technology.

"These technological advancements provide Barton with unparalleled precision, dexterity and control that enables a minimally invasive approach for complex surgical procedures,"

Willen said. "Da Vinci's been around for a while, and this is the third generation robot, so the advantage is, we have the latest and greatest."

The precision of the technology makes it ideal for certain delicate or complex surgeries because it makes it easier for surgeons to avoid surrounding nerves and organs.

"All of the current procedures have been improved through the ability to use the wristed instruments and 3-D vision," Welker said. "Our operations are much more precise than before. We've also noticed less postoperative pain with the da Vinci versus traditional laparoscopic surgery."

Praise from a patient

When Welker began operating with the da Vinci Si Surgical System in March, his eighth patient, Doug Witt, received three small incisions during his gallbladder surgery and said it was not as painful as he thought it would be.

"I just felt like I had done 80 sit-ups, just like in high school," Witt said. "I felt like I could have been up and running that night. I wanted to make sure there was someone

there to care for me, and the entire medical team was just great.”

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Note: Meet the da Vinci Si Surgical System and team at Barton Memorial Hospital’s open house May 31 from 4:30 to 6:30pm in the Snowflake Lobby.

Rebecca Wass is communications specialist for Barton Healthcare.