

superior methods tackle man's recurring cancer

Receiving a cancer diagnosis is heartbreaking news.

Now imagine finding out you have cancer several times within just a few years. That's exactly what Hillsborough resident Scott Colligan, 55, experienced.

His first diagnosis, bladder cancer, came when he was only 52 years old. During a routine doctor's appointment, he mentioned he'd been experiencing frequency and urgency with urination. Additional testing showed he had microscopic blood in his urine. A cystoscopy — in which a tiny camera provides a view inside the bladder — revealed he had a tumor.

Surgeons removed the tumor, but it reappeared less than two years later. "It was an aggressive type of cancer that could invade the muscle of the bladder and greatly increase the risk of spreading to other parts of the body," says Dhiren Dave, MD, urologist and robotic surgeon at Somerset Medical Center.

Dr. Dave recommended a radical cystectomy and prostatectomy, in which the bladder, prostate and lymph nodes are removed for the greatest shot at beating the cancer. Except he didn't suggest just any type of operation — he recommended Colligan undergo robotic surgery.

A CUT ABOVE

Robotic surgery uses the da Vinci Surgical System. "With robotic surgery, the instruments have a wider range of motion, so it allows us to move them inside the body like a human hand," Dr. Dave says. As a guide while operating, the surgeon views images from inside the patient's body on a 3-D high-definition screen, allowing for very precise movements. "As a result, we make smaller incisions and patients have less pain, a faster recovery and reduced risk for bleeding compared to both laparoscopic surgery and traditional open surgery," explains

Dr. Dave. Physicians work alongside specially trained nurses who are part of the robotic nursing team at Somerset Medical Center.

Before undergoing the operation, Colligan did his research. "I started interviewing many different doctors and researching different methods," he says. "At the end of the day, I felt really comfortable with Dr. Dave. He was very easy to talk to and gave very good explanations of what the surgery and recovery would involve." Colligan had a robotic radical cystectomy and prostatectomy in January 2013. He was up and walking the same night he had the operation and didn't even require a stay in the Intensive Care Unit.

ADVANCED SURGICAL TECHNIQUES, CLOSE TO HOME

However, a week before his surgery, Colligan received another cancer diagnosis. A preoperation CT (computerized tomography) scan showed a tumor on his right kidney. Dr. Dave assured him they could wait to address it until he recovered from the first operation.

Six months later, Dr. Dave removed the tumor on his kidney with robotic surgery once again. "With a partial nephrectomy, we stop blood flow to the kidney, cut the tumor out and reconstruct the kidney," Dr. Dave says. "We have to do it in as little time as possible because if the kidney goes too long without blood flow, it becomes irreversibly damaged. The robot allows us to do the procedure more quickly and suture more easily."

Colligan left the hospital the next day. He's been cancer-free since then and continues to regularly visit Dr. Dave for monitoring to make sure he stays that way. "Living in New Jersey, we're fortunate to have so many options if you need surgery," Colligan says. "I can tell Dr. Dave is really committed to helping people and curing cancer, and it was so convenient being able to receive these advanced operations close to home."



▶ Scott Colligan, 55, of Hillsborough, has been cancer-free since his robotic surgery at Somerset Medical Center.

Somerset Medical Center walks you through the benefits and details behind robotic surgery with videos and helpful links at somersetmedicalcenter.com/robotic. To request a referral, call **800-443-4605**.