

Somerset Medical Center - Healthy Edition Fall 2011

If you told Patricia Parsons a year ago that doctors would treat her cancer by freezing it, she probably wouldn't have believed you.

A few months after her April surgery, the 78-year-old still finds her experience "just amazing." She was treated for kidney cancer without major surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. Two days later, she was back at her Hillsborough home, able to get up and have breakfast.

Parsons was the first patient to undergo this advanced treatment, called cryoablation, with the help of Somerset Medical Center's da Vinci Robotic Surgical System. "The use of the da Vinci robot to precisely dissect and identify the kidney tumor allows us to accurately target the cancer for cryoablation. This technology makes this type of procedure much more precise and less painful," says Dhiren Dave, MD, the urologist at Somerset Medical Center who performed Parsons' surgery. "We were able to treat her cancer with very little risk of damaging the rest of her kidney."

Kind and Trusted Experts

Parsons' doctors first noticed a suspicious spot on her kidney about two years ago. By early 2011, her tumor had grown to 2 centimeters. Parsons was anxious about having surgery. But Dr. Dave's clear explanations put her at ease. "The whole team was very well-qualified and compassionate. I felt comfortable putting my life in their hands," she says.

Parsons also felt confident that she was getting state-of-the-art treatment. "Here at Somerset Medical Center, we are performing cutting-edge, innovative, complex procedures that are at the forefront of cancer therapy. We are committed to providing the highest level of care for our patients in a warm and caring environment, where they can receive personalized attention without traveling too far from home," Dr. Dave says.

The Newest Advances

With cryoablation, surgeons insert thin needles through the abdomen into the tumor. They then use the needles to deliver a blast of freezing gas.

"The idea is that using these small probes, we create a big ice ball to freeze the tumor," says Neel Shah, MD, another urologist who performs the procedure at Somerset Medical Center. "If we do the procedure robotically, the incisions are much smaller. Patients will have a shorter hospital stay and less pain."

Surgeons control the robot's tiny, precise surgical instruments by sitting at a console a few feet away. Cameras in the patient's abdomen give doctors a 3-D, close-up view of the tumor and the healthy organ around it.

No robotic procedure would be possible without the expert robotic nursing team. Nurses with specialized training in robotic surgery help monitor the patient, change instruments and get needed equipment.

A Bright Future

In Parsons' case, Dr. Dave froze 3 centimeters of her kidney, targeting the tumor and cancer cells around it while sparing the rest of the organ from damage. "Follow-up imaging shows that the tumor has completely shrunk - her treatment has been effective," Dr. Dave says.

Parsons' kidney works just as well as it did before, and her recovery has gone smoothly. She was in so little pain that she never even filled her prescription for pain medicine.

She'll continue to get follow-up care to make sure her cancer doesn't return. In the meantime, she's returning to her regular life, catching up on housework and gardening. "It's a miracle, I think, especially when you consider how difficult surgery used to be," she says.



After an advanced robotic procedure for kidney cancer, Patricia Parsons is back to tending her garden much sooner than if she'd undergone a standard surgical procedure.