

## HEALTHY LIVING

## State-of-the-art Surgery

Procedures handled robotically with da Vinci machine

BY BILL HENDRICK  
Cox News Service

Hunched over a huge gray console that looks like a giant video game, Dr. Nikhil Shah presses his face against the viewfinder of a da Vinci robot, eyes glued to a 3-D image of the gooey insides of a man's abdomen. His forefingers and thumbs twist twin joysticks that control tiny bird-beak snippers.

Through his magnified viewer, he uses the microtools that look huge to him to probe, push aside and cut thread-thin muscles, nerves and veins with precision in a prostate cancer patient lying on a gurney, 10 yards away.

All the while in his stocking feet, he's pumping foot pedals under the console like a piano maestro.

The 90-minute operation is successful. Patients spend only one night in the hospital, instead of three or four the old-fashioned way.

It's one of the reasons robotic surgery using the \$1.5 million da Vinci machine is exploding, especially for prostate surgery. It's also being done increasingly for other intricate operations — ranging from kidney removal to hysterectomies and cardiac bypasses.

Shah said the robots usually allow surgeons to prevent the side effects men and their sexual partners dread

most — impotence and incontinence.

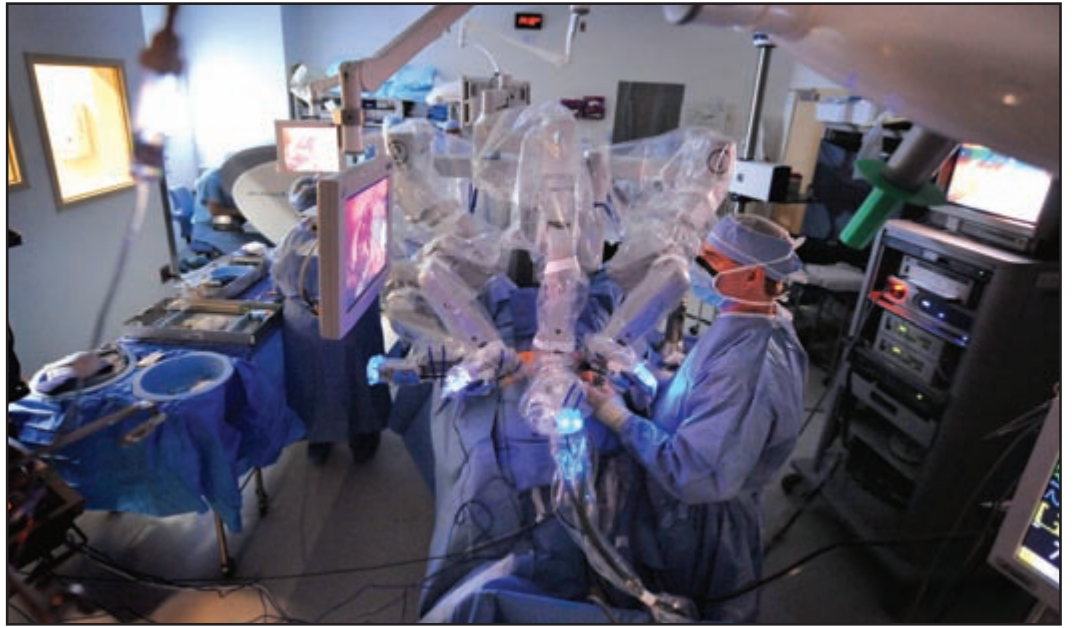
His patients, like Dan Fernandez, call him "the rock star" of prostate surgery "because there are so many advantages of this technique."

He scheduled the surgery, was discharged the next day, suffered little pain and has only a half-dozen tiny scars.

Not all men are as lucky, but most operated on by surgeons using the da Vinci robot return to normal within a matter of months, Shah said.

The robotic procedure is only one choice in what Dr. Brantley Thrasher, spokesman for the American Urological Association, calls a "bewildering" array of prostate treatments. The AUA (www.auanet.org) has no clear guidelines, and its literature makes decisions tough. Each method has strong advocates.

Prostate cancer, the second most prevalent form of the disease in men after lung cancer, is treated with total gland removal, with or without the surgical robot. Other methods include external beam radiation, inserted radioactive seeds, hormone therapy and cryotherapy, or freezing of the organ.



Dr. Nikhil Shah (left, staring into viewfinder) as he gets a high-definition look at a patient's prostate during surgery with the da Vinci machine at St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta. Surgical assistant Karl Csepi is in the foreground.

RICH ADDICKS / COX NEWS SERVICE

Studies haven't yet pinpointed "the best method," said Thrasher, who uses the robot at the University of Kansas.

Worldwide, 55,000 da Vinci prostatectomies were done last year, and it's expected to hit 75,000 in 2008, said James Alecxi of Intuitive Surgical of Sunnyvale, Calif., which makes the robots. In 2007, 13,000 robotic hysterectomies were done worldwide; that's

expected to hit 32,500 this year.

Shah, who has performed more than 1,000 robotic procedures, said the robots offer many advantages. Their tiny 3-D high-definition cameras magnify the insides of the abdomen, making tiny veins look like small cords. It makes it easier to spare critical nerves, resulting in "significantly better" erectile function than other procedures, he said. ■

## Yummy terms may disguise fatty truths

BY CAROLYN O'NEIL  
Cox News Service

Menu descriptions of dishes are written to entice diners to say, "That sounds good!"

I can't wait to try the grilled tenderloin of beef with crispy potato-leek cake, caviar and red wine reduction on the menu at a restaurant. The grilled cobia with summer vegetable cous cous and charred pepper vinaigrette sounds awesome, too.

And since many chefs today reveal just about every ingredient and cooking method in menu descriptions, it's easier to read between the lines to find the food facts you need to help decode the nutrition content.

In general, red-flag words for dishes high in fat and calories include cream, butter, fried, sauteed and cheese sauce. Green lights for choices lower in fat and calories include grilled, broiled, primavera, salsa and broth.

**Crispy = code word**

So, first look at how the dish is prepared. Is it deep-fat fried or charbroiled? Does it come with a butter sauce or a fresh fruit salsa? Is it a broth-based

soup or made with heavy cream? OK, these are some of the obvious clues. Now you're ready for some advanced menu sleuthing.

What if the word "fried" is nowhere to be seen? "Crispy" can be a code word for fried. And "silky sauce" a sign that butter is lurking. Even "poached" isn't always the light way to go. Some chefs actually poach seafood in butter or oil, not the usual water-based broths.

That doesn't mean you can't enjoy the occasional tempura-battered fried shrimp or side of creamed spinach. It just means that when you see them on the menu, you know it's time to take pause. You can choose to either limit portions, or limit the number of times you order these higher fat choices.

Even "grilled" or "broiled" aren't always innocent because the chicken or fish can be slathered in oil or but-



ter while it's on the fire. Make sure to request that your item be broiled "dry" or "lightly brushed with oil." The server is your conduit to the kitchen.

While restaurants such as Applebee's offer menu selections from Weight Watchers that are clearly marked with calorie counts, lighter choices are not always highlighted.

Healthy dishes such as gazpacho, poached salmon and pasta primavera have become part of mainstream dining. And you don't have to settle for less fun, because now chefs borrow interesting ingredients from Asian and Mediterranean cuisines to add bold flavors to dishes without adding additional fats.

**Menu-Speak, Made Easy**

- Fat by any other name
- Aioli: Mayonnaise with garlic
- Au gratin: Topped with cheese, butter and bread-crumble mixture
- Beurre: Butter's French name
- Bisque: Most often a cream-based soup
- Bearnaise: Watch the "-aise," which indicates egg-based mayonnaise
- Crispy: Code word for fried!
- Crusted or encrusted: Coated with

nuts, bread crumbs or potato, pan fried until crispy

**Leaning toward leaner**

- Au jus: Pan juices often reduced with no fat added
- Braise: Slow cooked to tenderize meats or fish, often little added fat
- Broth: Fragrant water-based sauce with infused flavors, i.e. chicken & lemongrass broth
- Coulis: All hail the coulis, often a no-fat-added puree of vegetables or fruit
- Primavera: Italian for "spring"; indicates vegetables are major ingredient
- Provencale: South-of-France-style sauce with tomato and other vegetables

**Ask questions if it says**

- Grilled: Watch out for butter or oil slathered on during grilling
- Roasted: Watch out for extra fat used in roasting, i.e. butter basted on roasted chicken
- Pan fried: Depends on temperature of pan how much fat is absorbed

Carolyn O'Neil is a registered dietitian and co-author of "The Dish on Eating Healthy and Being Fabulous!" ■

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