

Surgical robot provides second set of hands at Sacred Heart

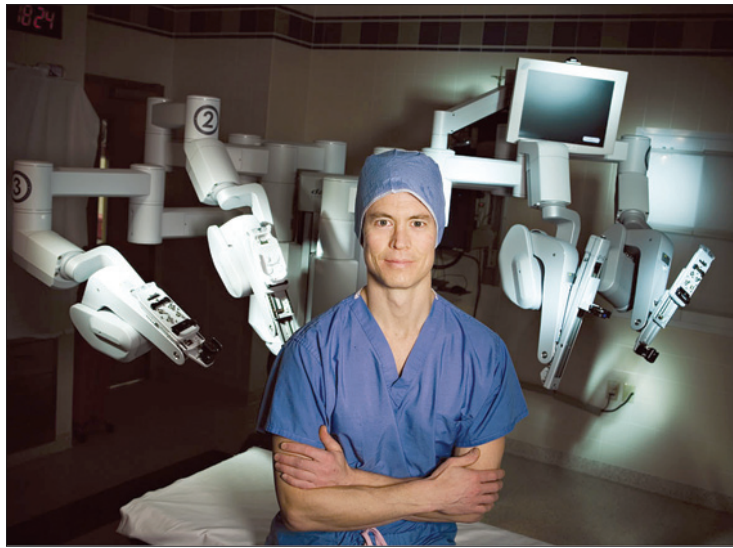
By JOSEPH O'BRIEN
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EAU CLAIRE – While the idea of robots performing complex and sensitive surgical procedures might have seemed at one time a premise for a novel set in the future, at Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire, it's not science fiction – but, thanks to their DaVinci Surgical System, a science reality.

Sacred Heart's urology department first began using DaVinci in 2006, and more than 225 successful surgical cases later, Sacred Heart has been able to confirm that the system is a real boon for patient and health care professionals alike. By manipulating a series of dexterous spider-like arms through a computer imaging console, urologists are able to perform various urological procedures more efficiently, less painfully and less invasively than under the traditional "open case" methods. DaVinci treats prostate cancer and a host of other urological diseases and conditions.

The DaVinci system was developed by Intuitive Surgical of Sunnyvale, Calif., in 1999. Since that time, more than 850 academic and community hospitals around the country have utilized Intuitive's patented technology in their operating rooms for procedures in cardiac, gynecologic, pediatric, and general surgical procedures.

According to Sacred Heart's



CT/Sacred Heart Hospital

In this advertisement photograph provided by Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire, Sacred Heart urologist James Iwakiri stands before the DaVinci Surgery System, a robotic device a surgeon uses to perform complicated and sensitive surgical procedures. First introduced at Sacred Heart in 2006, DaVinci has provided Iwakiri, fellow urologist Christopher Tornehl and the rest of the urology department's OR team an efficient way to treat patients with urological diseases or disorders.

assistant director of surgical services Stacey Powell, RN, among the benefits which DaVinci has over traditional surgical procedures, patients have a faster recovery time with a decreased risk in post-op complications and less blood loss during and after the procedure.

Sacred Heart's OR team has also seen the benefits of working with this improved medical technology. The hospital's certified surgical technologist Ann Paffel works closely with the robot and was present to celebrate the success of the first case in December 2006. "After the very first case, we had a

feeling of accomplishment because it was such a large jump in technology," Paffel said.

Powell noted that the actual OR time was cut in half since that first case. "In the beginning, one case would take almost a whole day," she noted. "Now, they're doing two a day, or doing a DaVinci and two or three other (non-robotic) cases."

As for maintaining the human touch in the brave new world of robotic surgery, Paffel said that tools do not replace the compas-

sion that has been a trademark of Sacred Heart's health care.

"We treat our patients as individuals, as human beings, just the same as we would with an open case," she said. "We still hold their hands. We'll talk to them and let them know about the procedure. When they wake up, same as any other case, we're right there asking them questions about pain and comfort. That really hasn't changed."

The human touch remains a constant, too, from the surgeon's perspective. Sacred Heart urologist Christopher Tornehl said that robotic surgery doesn't mean that the machine replaces the human.

"The surgeon is always in control of the robot, so it's more of an instrument that the surgeon uses," he said. "It's not something that you touch a button and it does the surgery for you. It's really another form of surgery, rather than an actual robot that does the surgery."

Rather than suffering from some sort of technological version of culture shock, Powell said, Sacred Heart's OR team sees robotics as the latest in a continuous stream of upgrades in surgical technology.

"It's not that surprising as technology," she said "For anyone who's worked in health

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care, and specifically the operating room, nothing stays the same. Every day there's either a new instrument, a new technology, or new procedure. It's just a matter of making sure we have the education we need before it happens."

Indicating the degree to which robotics has become secondhand for the medical profession, Tornehl noted that his own training as a surgeon included working with robotics in school.

"I'm two years out of training, and robotics has kind of exploded in the last five years," he said. "So it's been an integral part of my training."

The Diocese of La Crosse has an opening on the staff of its diocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Times*, for a full-time STAFF WRITER

Responsibilities: This person writes articles on and takes photographs of the various people, places and events of Catholic interest in the Diocese of La Crosse. The articles and photographs are for publication in *The Catholic Times* and for use in electronic media. This position also involves a limited amount of editing work for both print and electronic media.

Qualifications: A person in full communion with the Catholic Church; knowledge of Catholic doctrine and practice; sound organizational skills and strong attention to detail is required. Successful applicant will demonstrate a willingness to travel on a regular basis by automobile within the diocese. A bachelor's degree in English or journalism or equivalent knowledge gained through education and experience is preferred. Web and social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) experience a plus.

Please send letter of introduction, résumé, three examples of written work and samples of photography to: Search Committee, *The Catholic Times*, P.O. Box 4004, La Crosse, WI 54602-4004, or e-mail this information to editor@dioceseoflacrosse.com.

Applications accepted until position is filled.

Chapel at Franciscan Skemp rededicated



CT/Stan Gould

Bishop Jerome Listeki, along with Franciscan Skemp Medical Center chaplains Fathers Todd Mlsna (left) and Edmund Donker-Baine, celebrates Mass June 22 in the newly refurbished chapel at the La Crosse medical center. According to Father Mlsna, the updates were made to make the chapel a "a more welcoming place for people to come, to pray and to be." The 30 year-old orange carpets were replaced, the marble floor was restored, linoleum laminate was installed in the sanctuary, the trim around the stain glass windows was repainted gold, a door to the administration area was closed off and new track lighting was installed. At the start of the Mass, Bishop Listeki gave thanks to the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration "whose great devotion established this hospital, and whose continuing devotion to the Eucharist and to adoration, in my mind, supports all of us." Bishop Listeki also thanked all of the benefactors "who have been so kind to take from the great gifts that you have and shared with others, especially in the establishment of this place of sacredness – a reminder to all of us of Who the source is of all our healing and all our strength."