

Robotic surgery available to Lincolnshire prostate cancer patients

Cancer patients in Lincolnshire are now able to have robotic assisted surgery thanks to a ground-breaking new partnership.

The East Mercia Urology Alliance sees United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust and University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust bring together urology expertise into a single department. It is thought to be the first time hospitals from different NHS trusts have come together in this way.

Urology Consultant Aristeidis Alevizopoulos, who is employed by both Trusts, performs the robotic assisted prostatectomies at Leicester. The experience for our patients is better as there is less time waiting for referrals and those from Lincolnshire will have access to treatments that they could previously only have received privately as we did not have access to the high-tech machinery. One such treatment is the use of robotic assisted surgery, which is used for bladder cancer and prostate cancer.

Previously at ULHT patients treated for prostate cancer would have either an open radical prostatectomy or laparoscopy. With the new East Mercia Alliance we can offer them robotic surgery. This is a better treatment for patients with organ confined prostate cancer, as it combines the surgical precision of the robot with excellent oncologic and functional outcomes. Plus there is a reduced need for blood transfusion, less post-operative pain, reduced rate of peri-and post-operative complications and a shorter inpatient stay.

Patients who are offered robotic surgery will only need to travel to Leicester twice, once for their pre-assessment and a second time for their operation. They will have an expected inpatient stay of 1-2 days, compared to the average four day stay for an open radical prostatectomy. All follow up appointments will then be held at Lincoln.

The aim is for around 50 ULHT patients to have the robotic assisted surgery in the first year.

The whole idea around East Mercia Alliance was to join forces to give our patients access to better services including robotic surgery. It also gives us the opportunity to learn from other teams and to pool rare skills and expertise such as Mr Alevizopoulos.

He will be seeing our patients locally and give those who are suitable the option to have robotic surgery. Without this partnership we would not have had the chance to offer this type of surgery to our patients.

64-year-old Michael Couzens was one of the first patients from the county to undergo the robotic surgery for prostate cancer. He said: "When I was first told it was cancer I was in shock and feared the worst, but after speaking to Mr Alevizopoulos and the team I was reassured and felt so lucky to be able to have the robotic assisted surgery. He told me my options and I came away knowing that this was what I wanted to do.

"The surgery went well and there was a real buzz around the team who treated me. I have now only got six small keyhole incision scars rather than the surgeons having to open me right up for the traditional surgery. I am just so grateful to have been given the opportunity to be able to choose this type of surgery."

Urology Nurse Consultant Zina Bojin added: “This is an impressive development for the Trust and a huge achievement. We are all very excited and looking forward to working as part of the alliance and sharing expertise and practices with our colleagues from Leicester.”