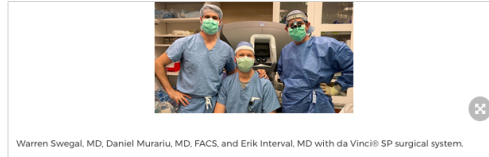


AHN Plastic Surgeons First in Region to Perform Tongue Reconstruction with Single-Port da Vinci Robotic System

AHN utilizes the latest innovative technology for minimally invasive head & neck surgery

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Allegheny Health Network
Sep 28, 2021, 12:30 ET

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Warren Swegal, MD, Daniel Murariu, MD, FACS, and Erik Interval, MD with da Vinci® SP surgical system.

PITTSBURGH, Sept. 28, 2021 /PRNewswire-PRWeb/ -- Plastic surgeons at Allegheny General Hospital (AGH), the flagship academic medical center of Allegheny Health Network (AHN), are the first in the region to perform a tongue reconstruction procedure utilizing the da Vinci® SP surgical system. The minimally invasive, robot-assisted technology is the latest advancement in the field of reconstructive surgery aimed at rebuilding hard-to-reach areas of the body often affected by aggressive cancer therapies.

After a stage three cancer diagnosis in the mouth and neck, a 50-year-old woman from North Huntingdon underwent the new robotic reconstructive surgical procedure on August 18 after a tumor was removed from the base of her tongue.

The da Vinci® SP surgical system's three fully articulating instruments and camera allows AHN surgeons to perform complex cancer surgeries and reconstructions transorally. This approach eliminates the need to make large incisions to the lips, neck or split the jaw for surgical access—resulting in decreased scarring, shorter recovery times and hospital stays, reduced pain and less narcotic use. Compared to traditional methods, the technique also increases patient safety by reducing potential complications. These outcomes were recently documented in a 2021 study published in *Cancers* ("Current Advances in Robotics for Head and Neck Surgery—A Systematic Review" doi: 10.3390/cancers13061398).

"Very few surgical programs in the country have developed the expertise to perform reconstructive surgery with the da Vinci system, particularly transoral procedures like tongue reconstruction," said Dr. Murariu.

 Post this

The advanced procedure at AHN is performed by a team of surgeons at the hospital, beginning with the resection of cancerous tissue and tumors by AHN otolaryngologists Warren Swegal, MD, Elias Hial, MD, and Erik Interval, MD. Once the tumor is removed, Daniel Murariu, MD, FACS, director of Microsurgery and Lymphatic Surgery at AHN, uses the robotic system to perform the tongue reconstruction using tissue from the patient's thigh. This procedure improves the patient's swallowing and speech post-surgery.

The improved surgical access afforded by the da Vinci SP enables the AHN team to treat cancers more effectively in the tongue, tonsils and voice box, among other areas.

"Very few surgical programs in the country have developed the expertise to perform reconstructive surgery with the da Vinci system, particularly transoral procedures like tongue reconstruction," said Dr. Murariu. "The single-port robotic technique can significantly improve a patient's quality of life post-surgery and that is immensely important to us."

The da Vinci® SP robot is widely recognized as a pioneering technology in the field of laparoscopic and minimally invasive surgery. AHN surgeons have used the system for more than two decades to advance surgery across many disciplines, including heart surgery, urologic procedures, general surgery, gynecologic surgery and more. The new generation single port da Vinci technology is currently being used at AHN for urology, ENT, colorectal and plastic surgeries.

In 2021, more than 54,000 Americans were diagnosed with oral cavity and oropharyngeal cancers, which includes cancer in the tongue, tonsils, oropharynx, gums and other parts of the mouth. Most patients in need of specialized reconstructive surgeries are currently undergoing cancer treatment that includes chemotherapy, radiation and/or surgical treatments. While head and neck cancers are rarer, making up about 4% of cancers in the U.S., AHN's Cancer Institute has extensive experience caring for patients with these diagnoses.

AHN cancer patients are cared for by a compassionate, multidisciplinary team of oncologists and other caregivers from the AHN Cancer Institute. Clinicians from various cancer disciplines, including medical, surgical and radiation oncology, work together closely to determine the most effective course of treatment to meet a patients' long-term health goals and needs.

For more information on the AHN Cancer Institute or AHN Plastic Surgery division, visit ahn.org.

About the Allegheny Health Network:

Allegheny Health Network (AHN.org), a Highmark Health company, is an integrated healthcare delivery system serving the greater Western Pennsylvania region. The Network is composed of 13 hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, Health + Wellness Pavilions, an employed physician organization, home and community based health services, a research institute, and a group purchasing organization. The Network provides patients with access to a complete spectrum of advanced medical services, including nationally recognized programs for primary and emergency care, trauma care, cardiovascular disease, organ transplantation, cancer care, orthopedic surgery, neurology and neurosurgery, women's health, diabetes, autoimmune disease and more. AHN employs approximately 21,000 people, has more than 2,500 physicians on its medical staff and serves as a clinical campus for Drexel University College of Medicine and the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine.

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