



LINDA ELROD AND KIMM SMITH

# Robotic-Assisted Surgery with the da Vinci Xi

**Calhoun resident Kimm Smith** planned to care for her mother for a few weeks following surgery to remove a mass on her kidney.

“I thought, with her being 77, two to three weeks would be a good recovery time,” said Smith, a retired Gordon County Schools educator.

But Linda Elrod, of Cartersville, needed less help than her daughter anticipated following the procedure, which was performed by Hak Lee, MD, using AdventHealth Gordon’s new da Vinci Xi robotic-assisted surgery technology. “After the first week, I stayed by myself,” Elrod said. “I would say in about three weeks, I was feeling much, much better.”

“Even one to two weeks after, she was doing a lot for herself,” Smith added.

Dr. Lee, director of robotic surgery at AdventHealth Gordon, said patients who undergo robotic-assisted surgeries often have faster recoveries than patients who have similar procedures done without robotic assistance.

“There are better outcomes, and we are seeing the patients recover faster without pain medicine and that’s already a win,” he said.

Smith said her mother, a former cosmetologist, never needed anything stronger than over-the-counter acetaminophen to manage her pain after the surgery.

“She never even took much over-the-counter stuff—that’s how little pain she had,” she said.

Elrod became Dr. Lee’s patient after a December 2020 trip to the emergency room in Cartersville.

“They did a CT scan, and they [diagnosed] colitis and also found a spot on my right kidney,” she said. “I had no indication anything was wrong with my kidney, so it was a blessing they found it that way. By the time I had symptoms, it could have been much worse.”

She was encouraged to make an appointment with a urologist and was given the choice of seeing specialists in Marietta, Canton or at AdventHealth in Calhoun.

“I decided on Calhoun because Kimm lived there, and it was more convenient,” Elrod said.

Dr. Lee ordered a renal scan, which Elrod said showed a “pretty good-sized” mass on her kidney.

“He said they are usually 75 to 85 percent cancerous and it had to come out and that hers was angry,” Smith said.

Dr. Lee gave Elrod two treatment options, and she elected to have the mass removed via the da Vinci Xi, which the hospital had just begun using in early 2021 as an upgrade to the previous model robot.

“He told us with the robot, there’s less recovery time, and it’s less invasive,” Smith said.

Elrod’s surgery is one of more than 50 performed at AdventHealth Gordon since the hospital acquired the new da Vinci Xi robot and one of nearly 700 since Dr. Lee started its robotic surgery program in 2015, according to Robotic Clinical Coordinator Sharon Bass, RN, CNOR.

“Within five years, it went from just me to all these other surgeons who saw the benefit of the

robot and said, ‘If this is better for my patients, I’m going to learn about it,’” Dr. Lee said. “We want to give the best care possible to the community that we can.”

Part of delivering the best care possible, he said, is staying abreast of technological advancements and upgrading equipment to meet new standards of care.

“We don’t want to have the oldest technology taking care of our patients in need,” Dr. Lee said.

He commended AdventHealth Gordon’s leadership for investing in technological upgrades that improve surgical outcomes for patients.

“Our goal is to provide our communities with the best care possible,” said Mike Murrill, president and CEO of AdventHealth Gordon. “That happens with a great team of physicians and nurses and support staff, and it also happens when you have the best technology. In order to retain and attract medical personnel to our region, it is important that we provide them with the best tools possible to care for our patients.”

Dr. Lee said the new generation multiport robot provides the best technological advances for robotic surgery.

“The benefits are far greater than what we used to offer,” he said. “It allows for better vision. It allows for better magnification and better port placement so there’s less clashing of robotic arms.”

The slimmer robotic arms can rotate in any direction, allowing surgeons to operate from any angle, he added.

The technology interacts wirelessly with a TruSystem OR table, which allows patients to be dynamically positioned while the surgeons operate so they can access whatever part of the body they need to reach.

“It’s a bed that is connected to the robot that allows you to reach all the quadrants of the abdomen without having to dock and re-dock,” Dr. Lee said. “It allows for multi-quadrant surgery.”

This feature, Dr. Lee said, allows surgeons to operate faster and with smoother, more efficient movements.

Elrod said she felt confident going into the surgery, particularly because Bass walked her and Smith

through the process step-by-step.

“The care coordinator took care of everything for us,” she said. “She was absolutely phenomenal.”

The mass Dr. Lee removed from her kidney proved to be nonmalignant.

“He said the surgery went like I was a 40-year-old and not a 70-year-old,” Elrod said.

Her husband was a partial paraplegic, so she and Smith said they’ve had plenty of hospital experiences to compare this one to.

“That was one of the better hospital stays we’ve ever had,” Smith said.

She and Elrod agreed their positive experience had everything to do with AdventHealth’s focus on providing whole-person care that treats a patient’s physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. They particularly appreciated Elrod being able to visit with her family during her two-day stay.

“AdventHealth believes it’s about more than just physical care,” Smith said. “There’s also the mental and spiritual aspect of it. When they tell you the surgeon yells ‘Hallelujah’ while he’s doing surgery because someone told him the mass was benign, you know you’ve got a good surgeon. Everyone was so compassionate and caring.”

Even a month after the surgery, Smith said the staff followed up to check on her mother’s recovery and told her to call or text if she had any questions. Those type of gestures, she said, are evidence of their focus on whole-person care.

“You can tell it in the way they do things,” she said. “The proof’s there.”

*For more information on our robotic surgery program, please call 706-602-7800 ext. 4052.*



DR. HAK LEE AND THE DA VINCI XI