Use Of Robots For Hysterectomy Soars, But With Little Benefit

Charles Bankhead

Robotically assisted hysterectomy increased dramatically from 2007 to 2010, despite higher cost and similar complication rates compared with laparoscopic procedures, a review of data from more than 400 hospitals showed.

Robotically assisted procedures accounted for 0.5% of hysterectomies in 2007 and almost 10% of procedures in 2010. At hospitals offering robotic hysterectomy, the approach accounted for more than 20% of all hysterectomies, according to Jason Wright, MD, of Columbia University in New York City, and co-authors.

The growth of robotic hysterectomy volume occurred despite a lack of data to support any advantages over conventional laparoscopic hysterectomy, the investigators reported in the Feb. 20 issue of JAMA.

"Our population-based analysis suggests that, despite limited data, the use of robotically assisted hysterectomy for benign gynecologic disease increased substantially over a 3-year period," they wrote in their commentary on the findings.

"The introduction of robotic-assisted hysterectomy was paralleled by a decrease in the rate of abdominal hysterectomy, both in hospitals where robotic-assisted hysterectomy was performed and in those where robotic procedures were not performed."

"Our study indicates that, while robotic assistance was associated with increased use of minimally invasive surgery for hysterectomy, when compared with laparoscopic hysterectomy, the robotic procedure offers little short-term benefit and is accompanied by significantly higher costs," they added.

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