Single Port Surgeries Performed At University

Advances trend toward less-invasive approaches

PRINCETON, N.J., June 8 /PRNewswire/ -- Advancing the trend toward ever less invasive surgery, University Medical Center at Princeton [1] is now performing laparoscopic surgery by way of a single incision through the belly button -- becoming one of a handful of centers in the Northeastern United States to offer the procedure.

With virtually no visible scar, less pain and faster recovery time, "single port laparoscopic surgery" is an important medical advance that provides significant benefits for patients.

In traditional laparoscopic surgery, doctors make multiple "keyhole" incisions -- usually three or four -- in different sites on the body through which a specialized camera and surgical instruments are inserted. This method represented a clinical breakthrough when it came on the scene nearly 20 years ago, providing the first alternative to the long, open incisions normally associated with surgery. Patients, however, still had to recover from these multiple small incisions, and deal with the cosmetic issue of multiple scars.

In single port laparoscopic surgery, only one incision is made through the navel, with all instruments passing through that opening. "This is the next advance of laparoscopic surgery, from multiple incisions to just a single incision in the belly button," said Henry Davison, MD, a board-certified surgeon who performs single port procedures at University Medical Center at Princeton. "This is where the technology is moving, and it's something people can take advantage of right now."

Dr. Davison has performed more than 30 single port surgeries since mastering the technique last fall. Gall bladder and appendix removals make up the vast majority of his single port procedures. The technique is also being used in kidney donation operations and other select procedures.

The benefits for patients are substantial. Cosmetically, the single port approach is a major advance as it leaves the patient with virtually no visible scar. A single incision also means less post-operative pain and slightly reduced risk of infection than a recovery from multiple incisions.

Dr. Davison's experience confirms these benefits. He estimates that 75 percent of his single port patients are going home directly from the recovery room, where previously more than half would have been admitted for an overnight hospital stay. He also observed that patients are managing with less pain medication than patients who have had traditional laparoscopic surgery, and making a faster return to full activity.

Two specialized instruments helped make the single port technique a reality, said Dr. Davison. One is a device called the Triport, a multi-instrument access port made by the company Advanced Surgical Concepts.

The second is a special laparoscope -- the camera instrument -- with a bendable tip that lets doctors see around corners.

Aside from these tools, the surgical technique for the single port approach is much the same as for traditional laparoscopic surgery, Dr. Davison said.

"I learned it very quickly. It was a natural step for me," he said.

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