SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

Former patient now matches others with robotic surgery

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ain tends to have very bad timing. At age 27, **Elizabeth Carpenter was** married, working, going to school, all while trying to keep up with her three-year-old. Not a lot of time for endometriosis. A fairly common female disorder in which cells from the lining of the uterus grow in other areas of the body, it can bring with it a host of symptoms, like heavy cycles, fatigue, and a fair dose of pain.

When pain medications aren't enough, a hysterectomy is often a viable solution. She and her husband, Jon, were done having children, but a long recovery time was even more bad timing. So her doctor suggested a robotic hysterectomy, performed on the da Vinci robotic surgical system. As a nurse at Liberty Hospital at the time, she was familiar with the system but was shocked to learn how

quick recovery could be.

Traditional open hysterectomy

can mean significant pain and a

surgery requires a large incision and

long recovery process. The da Vinci

method uses only tiny, dime-sized

MD, an obstetrician/gynecologist

incisions to access the uterus.

This allowed Ward Ohlhausen.

at the hospital, to perform the

surgery with greater precision

and control, minimize pain, and

speed up Carpenter's recovery.

she was home the next day.

After just one night in the hospital,

"For me, it was a

no-brainer," she said.

"I tell people this still to this day that I never had any pain," she said. "After four days, I went to a July 4th celebration, shooting off fireworks. I wasn't running around, but I was feeling fine. A week after that, we went on a planned family vacation."

Today, she still espouses the benefits of the da Vinci system each day on the job. After finishing her master's, she now works as a nurse practitioner at Urology Specialists, PC, working with men and women who suffer from incontinence, pelvic pain, kidney stones, erectile dysfunction and many other conditions.

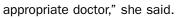


"I didn't know it could be so fascinating, but I love it!"

Part of her job is to also identify patients who would be wellserved by da Vinci surgery. Three of the physicians at the practice are trained to use the robotic system, which is invaluable for many urology surgeries, like prostatectomies (removal of the prostate) and kidney surgeries.

"If I see a patient that I know will be a good candidate...I identify that and give them all the information and then refer them over to the

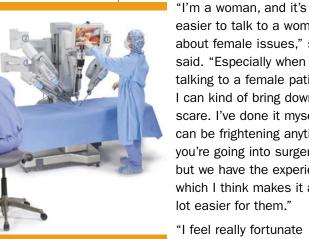
LEFT A former robotic-surgery patient herself, Elizabeth Carpenter now helps identify and educate her urology patients on the benefits of da Vinci surgery.



Having firsthand experience, she helps demystify the process.

"When people hear the word 'robot,' they're kind of, 'There's going to be a robot operating on me?' I think for patients...it's a 'scare' thing. But, you know, if you educate people, go over the risks and benefits, and make sure they can make an informed consent for what they want, then we obviously are 100-percent supportive of it."

Plus, as the only female urology provider in the Northland, she is in a unique position.



easier to talk to a woman about female issues," she said. "Especially when talking to a female patient, I can kind of bring down the scare. I've done it myself. It can be frightening anytime you're going into surgery, but we have the experience, which I think makes it a lot easier for them."

"I feel really fortunate here, at Liberty Hospital,

to have the da Vinci."

Today, Carpenter still stays plenty busy balancing a successful career with her active family, but she is finally enjoying that busy life without pain.

"Looking back, I'm glad I did it...l feel like l'm healthier now than I ever have been. It was a piece of cake."

For more information about da Vinci robotic surgery at Liberty Hospital, visit www.libertyhospital.org.