

Seattle surgeon first in the Pacific Northwest to complete record 3000 procedures with the da Vinci System robotic technology

Dr. James Porter of Swedish Medical Center among top five in nation, helps make non-invasive laparoscopy a standard surgical treatment for prostate and kidney cancer

Dr. James Porter, a member of the Swedish Urology Group and the medical director for robotic surgery at Swedish Medical Center, today announced the completion of his 3000th da Vinci System surgery.

The da Vinci System is a state-of-the-art robotic-assisted surgical device that gives surgeons enhanced vision, precision and control. It provides a 3D view in high-definition, and surgeons work through a few small incisions with micro instruments that bend and rotate far greater than the human hand.

“Robotics requires a real commitment to technical analysis and data collection to track and learn from results,” says Dr. Porter. “Above all, the hallmark of a good practice is a team of experts working together in real time.”

Dr. Porter specializes primarily in prostate and kidney treatments. The potential benefits over open surgery include a shorter hospital stay; reduced pain, less blood loss and decreased risk of infection; and a faster return to normal activities.

One of the most common treatments for prostate cancer involves the surgical removal of the prostate gland, known as radical prostatectomy. Traditional radical prostatectomy requires an 8-10-inch incision, commonly resulting in substantial blood loss, a lengthy and uncomfortable recovery, and the risk of impotence and incontinence.

“I had prostate cancer when I was 43 and chose robotic surgery to treat it,” said Dr. Porter. “The experience had made me a more empathetic and better surgeon.”

A passionate mentor, Dr. Porter actively teaches and promotes minimally invasive surgical techniques to the national and international urologic community. Similar to pilots preparing for the cockpit, robotics and simulation will become key components of how the next generation of surgeons are trained and will shorten the learning curve.

“I sought out Dr. Porter for his expertise in teaching others because someone that is highly skilled is sought out by his peers for knowledge transfer,” said Brian Tinsley, a recent patient. “Meeting with Dr. Porter face to face, his soft-spoken confidence is evident from the second you meet him and you know he’s going to give you his full attention to meet your needs.”

Even fellow robotic surgeons choose Dr. Porter. “My research on surgical approaches as well as my own experience with being a robotic gynecologic surgeon led me to Dr. Porter,” said Dr. John Lenihan, a recent patient. “It is clear to me from the data that the learning curve for becoming accomplished at this procedure is fairly lengthy and that the more surgeries a surgeon performs the better. Dr. Porter has done more than 3,000 procedures, so if anyone could get the optimal result from surgery, it would be him.”

Dr. Porter completed his residency in urology at the University of Washington in 1996. He received his laparoscopic training in Heilbronn, Germany. Before joining the Swedish Urology Group in 2005, Dr. Porter served as chief of urology at Harborview Medical Center and subsequently as head of laparoscopic and robotic surgery in the Department of Urology at the University of Washington Medical Center, where he has also directed the Laparoscopic Fellowship in Urology.