Robotic-Assisted Surgery for Gynecologic Cancer

Jennifer Bailey of Brockton, MA first thought that her pelvic pain and irregular menstrual cycles were stress related. She decided to see her doctor when the discomfort did not subside. On December 8, 2009, the 39 year-old was diagnosed with endometrial cancer, a common cancer that forms in the tissue lining of the uterus.

“I cried,” she described her reaction to the news. “It was difficult.” Her OB/GYN recommended that she see a women’s cancer specialist. Bailey read about endometrial cancer on the internet and researched different treatment options and doctors. She found Robert Kim, MD a board-certified Gynecologic Oncologist at St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center. “Dr. Kim was able to see us within a day after I called to make my appointment. It helped ease my anxiety that I was able to be seen right away. For my first visit, I prepared a long list of questions, and Dr. Kim explained everything in a clear manner. He explained my condition and why my tumor had grown. Both my husband and I felt comfortable and knew that we were in good hands.”

According to Dr. Kim, “When I see a new patient that has been diagnosed with endometrial cancer, I explain where the cancer is located, why the cancer appeared, and more importantly, all of the available treatment options. When I presented Jennifer with the robotic-assisted surgery option, I explained that most patients go home the next day and return to work in half of the time compared to traditional surgery. We find that most patients require little-to-no pain medication. The da Vinci® robot uses tiny instruments and 3-D vision which enables us to make small incisions that look better and minimize blood loss to avoid transfusion.”
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“The night before the surgery, Dr. Kim called me to answer any of my last minute questions. I was so impressed that he called to make sure that I was okay,” Bailey recalls. When describing her surgery, she recounts there was no pain, just five little incisions on her stomach. With the help of St. E’s staff and support of her loved ones, Bailey recovered quicker than she had expected and was able to walk around on the night of her operation. She has told everyone about her experience and highly recommends Dr. Kim. “The St. E’s staff was great,” she commented. “They answered all my questions. They saved my life. I am so thankful to have the best team in Boston take care of me. I really felt like it was a team approach with Dr. Kim and his staff.” Fortunately, Bailey’s cancer was caught in the earliest stage before it had spread. Dr. Kim counsels that 80% of endometrial cancers are caught in the earliest stages and can often be cured with surgery alone by a gynecologic oncologist.

In this way, patients receive a second, third and fourth opinion. We feel blessed that St. Elizabeth’s philosophy is that every patient is treated as a person. We can provide the most advanced treatments along with the personal time and attention tailored to each patient and her unique situation. St. E’s is where they come for their robotic surgery. But I like to perform all of the follow-up visits and treatments in places closer to our patient’s homes like Brockton and Methuen. We realize the importance of family and community in the well-being of our patients, so we bring our special talents and team to them.”

For more information, call (617) 562-7406.

Dr. Kim adds, “St. E’s offers a unique post-treatment plan for our patients. All of our cancer cases are presented at our multidisciplinary Tumor Board conference consisting of gynecologic, radiation, and medical oncologists and cancer support teams from Tufts Medical Center and Steward Health Care.”