
Domo Arigato, Mr. Roboto: Confluence Health Celebrates 2000th Robotic Surgery with Event

Wenatchee, WA: Visitors to Confluence Health Hospital Central Campus this last week were likely a bit surprised to see a very different sort of greeter near the entrance: a four-armed, eight-foot-tall surgery robot.

In celebration of the 2000th robotic surgery performed at Confluence Health, the organization partnered with Intuitive, the company that makes the Da Vinci Xi surgical robot, to commemorate the milestone by bringing in a traveling surgical robot, allowing community members, staff, and others to try their hand at the machine. While only a traveling demonstration device, the surgical robot on display is the same as the one surgeons use at Confluence Health and helps to highlight the tool's capabilities to tackle a wide range of surgical needs.

In addition to the robotic centerpiece, two console control centers, which allow the surgeon to operate the robot while seated using hand and foot controls with a magnified, high-definition, 3-D view, were also available. Cake and an anniversary-themed coffee special at the nearby stand, along with some Confluence Health and Intuitive swag, helped round out the event. Despite the festive atmosphere, these robotic surgical tools play a very important role in some surgeries and recovery.

"Since I started robotic surgery four years ago, it has been a game-changer in the types of surgery I can do for my patients and allows for much quicker recovery," reflected Dr. Catherine Straub, general surgeon at Confluence Health. "For example, an abdominal wall hernia or colon surgery might normally require five to six days in the hospital to recover, but, with robotic surgery, they may be able to go home in as little as one to two days."

Liz Dittbrender, perioperative service director, agreed: "Because of the ability to have full 360° mobility with the instruments, surgery with a robot helps surgeons to do more while being even less invasive than laparoscopic surgeries. This cuts down on recovery time as well, so patients can go home sooner."

In addition to the opportunity for community members and staff to see the state-of-the-art device, Wenatchee High School students in courses studying medicine also took a field trip to check out the device, talk to Intuitive reps about medical technology, and even have a question-and-answer time with surgeon Dr. Straub about her experience in medicine and advice for those considering it as a career.

One of the instructors accompanying the students was a familiar face at Confluence Health. Tracey Kasnic, former chief nursing officer and current career and technical education coordinator at Wenatchee High School, brought her classes along with emergency medical technician (EMT) and allied health instructor Dustin Armitage.

"It's important to give students this opportunity since they get to see the huge number of roles available in healthcare," remarked Kasnic. "There is the surgeon, who is the captain of the ship, but there are also med techs, nurses, and many others – including technology like the surgery robot – that play important parts in care."

About Confluence Health

Confluence Health serves the largest geographic region of any healthcare system in Washington State, covering over 12,000 square miles of Okanogan, Grant, Douglas, and Chelan counties. Confluence Health is one of only two locally-lead healthcare systems in the state with the purpose of maintaining availability and access to high-quality, cost-effective

healthcare services for North Central Washington. The Confluence Health Board of Directors provides governance for Confluence Health and includes nine community board members and six physician board members.

For More Information

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