Focusing on You: Head and Neck Cancer Patients Benefit From Robotic Surgery

Transoral robotic surgery is helping patients recover faster, in many cases eliminating the need for radiation or chemotherapy.

A minimally invasive procedure using robotic technology is helping patients with head and neck cancers recover faster, says Giovana Thomas, M.D., a head and neck oncologic surgeon at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and Director of the Robotic Surgery Program for the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of Miami Health System. She says that in many cases the robotic procedure eliminates the need for radiation and chemotherapy treatments.

TRANSCRIPTION

Bruce Hunter:
A few months ago, I was diagnosed with Stage I HPV throat cancer.

Narrator:
When Bruce Hunter was named man of the year for the American Cancer Society's Wine and Spirits Gala, he had no idea he would be speaking as a cancer survivor.

Bruce Hunter:
I was very lucky and very blessed that they did find it.
Narrator:
Bruce went to see Dr. Giovana Thomas, a head and neck oncologic surgeon at Sylvester and director of the robotic surgery program for the department of otolaryngology at UHealth. She offered Bruce a minimally invasive procedure.

Dr. Giovana Thomas:
Basically what it is, is a technique that we use to access very difficult areas in the throat that is not easily accessible without having to split the jaw or split the lip.

Narrator:
This prevents the possibility of scarring for the patient.

Dr. Giovana Thomas:
The robotic surgery, through the mouth avoids all of those disfiguring procedures that required also much time for the patients to heal from and to regain your swallowing function.

Narrator:
Transoral robotic surgery means a faster recovery for patients often eliminating the need for further therapies.

Dr. Giovana Thomas:
The patient may avoid any additional treatment that may consist of radiation and/or chemotherapy. And we know that less treatment for the patient means less side effects.

Narrator:
Dr. Thomas successfully removed the tumor on Bruce's tonsil.

Bruce Hunter:
I was in surgery for a few hours and I came out, and three days later I was home.
Dr. Giovana Thomas:
He did not require any additional treatments.

Narrator:
One month later, Bruce was speaking at the cancer gala thanks to robotic technology and the entire UHealth team.

Bruce Hunter:
They did a wonderful job through the surgery and especially with robotic surgery, which really was a lifesaver.