Trans oral robotic surgery

This leaflet explains more about trans oral robotic surgery. It will tell you why it is being offered, the benefits, risks and alternative treatments. It will give you an overview of the process from being referred, through to after your operation. If you have any further questions or concerns please speak to a doctor or a nurse caring for you.

You will have already been given information about trans oral surgery. The aim of this leaflet is to explain more about trans oral robotic surgery (TORS). Using a robotic system for certain types of throat surgery may allow us to perform this operation in a less invasive way and improve the patients’ outcome.

What is TORS?
It is a more sophisticated way of performing trans oral surgery. We have had a robotic system (da Vinci®) at Guy’s for over a decade, and it is regularly used to perform prostate, bladder and lung surgery. The robot doesn’t carry out any procedures on its own. The surgeon, sitting at a console near the patient, controls the robot. The surgeon is able to use robotic arms, which are connected to surgical instruments in the patient's mouth.

The advantage of the robot is that it allows the surgeon to perform complex manoeuvres, such as removing tumours without breaking up the tumour itself.

Why am I being offered TORS?
We are starting a programme of TORS. This is being used as standard practice in several specialist units across the UK.

Our hope is that this will lead to a quicker recovery, less pain and a better outcome (such as swallow function) after the operation, compared with conventional treatment.

Has the procedure been performed already?
TORS is new to Guy’s Hospital. It has been performed extensively in Europe and the USA. Results from all these centres have been good, and formal comparisons with conventional treatment are being carried out.

What are the risks of TORS?
There are some risks that are associated with any surgery, irrespective of the technique used. These include the risk of bleeding (during and/or after the operation), infection and a small risk of airway obstruction. Your surgical team will give you more details about the risks associated with head and neck surgery.

The potential risks of using the robot include the risks associated with any keyhole operation – the potential for damage to the blood vessels and other organs from the instruments.
What is the experience of the team?
The team consists of three Consultant Head and Neck Surgeons: Mr Asit Arora was involved with pioneering the technique in the UK, and along with Mr Luke Cascarini, both are experienced with Robotic Head & Neck surgery. Mr Jean Pierre Jeannon is a very experienced Head & Neck cancer surgeon and the Clinical Director at our hospital.

The robot operation is similar to the standard operation. We have received additional training on simulators on the robotic system itself, and by observing surgeons perform TORS in other centres.

Are there any alternatives?
Yes. You do not have to agree to undergo TORS. You can have your surgery in the conventional way, and if you chose to do so, your care will not be affected. You will be given adequate time to think about your decision, and opportunities to discuss this with a member of the surgical team.

Giving your consent
We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

What happens after I have my surgery?
Your surgical team will discuss the care you will receive after the operation with you, including the expected length of stay. We will ask you some questions while you are in hospital (such as assessing your pain and swallow function) in order to gauge the effects of the procedure, and will collect some data (such as time taken to return to normal activities) on your recovery when you are seen at the follow-up Head and Neck surgery clinic.

We hope you have found this leaflet useful. All patients are different and we strongly advise that you discuss your situation carefully with your medical and nursing teams to ensure that you understand the implications for you personally.

Contact us
Mr Ed Savill – Head and Neck service manager, t: 020 7188 4264
Mr Asit Arora – Consultant ENT Head and Neck surgeon, t: 020 7188 2213

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.
t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

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Language and accessible support services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

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NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

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NHS Choices
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Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust
Members of Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

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