

New method of surgery reduces number of incisions

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Following gall bladder surgery at Greenwich Hospital, Ivneet Ahuja, 30, was back on her feet in two days without any scars to show for it.

Ahuja, a stay-at-home mother from Stamford, underwent a technique to remove the gall bladder using single-port surgery, a new method being performed by surgeons Bruce Molinelli and Athanassios Petretrtos at Greenwich Hospital.

They are among only a dozen or so doctors in the country attempting to do this technique, said Tim Nolan, vice president of sales and marketing at Surgiquest, an Orange, Conn.-based company.

Surgiquest developed a tool for the surgery called the AnchorPort, a device that can penetrate the abdominal wall and allow instruments to access internal organs. The company sponsors courses on the technique and has recognized Molinelli and Petretrtos as at the top of the field.

"We're doing something that not that many other people are doing," Molinelli said. "It's really brand new."

Single-port surgery is a form of laparoscopic, or minimally invasive, surgery that is performed through a single incision, generally through the navel.

Traditional laparoscopic surgery requires multiple incisions. For the gall bladder surgery in particular, there are typically four. It is a very challenging procedure because there is only one entry point, the surgeon's movement is restricted. But there have been many flexible surgical tools, and a small camera, developed to help with the procedure.

"It takes fortitude to do it properly and safely," he said.

Since June, Molinelli and Petretrtos have performed 15 single-port procedures, mostly the removal of gall bladders, an operation they have found is easily completed through a single incision, Molinelli said.

There are hopes that other operations can be done at Greenwich Hospital using the single-port method, he said. Besides gall bladder surgery, other procedures that can be performed with the single-port method include kidney removal and donation, bladder and prostate removal, freezing of cancerous tissue, various pelvic organ and vaginal operations and urinary tract reconstruction.

"The magnitude of the benefits of the surgery will be more readily known in the future," said Nolan. For Ahuja, the benefits were obvious.

"It was great. It took me a little more than a day to get up and walk around," she said. "And there is no scar and that makes it worth it."

She had another a laparoscopic procedure performed on her ovaries a few years ago that left her with some scars and took her weeks to recover from, she said.

"It took me a while to get back on my feet - that's all I remember," she said. "I would definitely recommend the single-port surgery."