Media Advisory

AVERAGE AGE OF PROSTATE CANCER PATIENTS GETTING YOUNGER

Prostate cancer, the fifth most common cancer in men, is seen mostly in men over 70 years of age. However, in the last five years, Urologists at the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) have observed that the average age of prostate cancer patients is now over 60 years with the youngest patient seen in his late 30s. The number of new cases at SGH has also increased by about 20%, primarily due to PSA (prostate specific antigen) screening.

For surgical treatment of early stage prostate cancer, Laparoscopic (keyhole) Radical Prostatectomy (LRP) has grown in popularity due to its benefits, which include tiny wounds, less pain and a faster recovery.

In 2003, SGH Department of Urology was the first in the region to introduce Robot-assisted LRP using the da Vinci Surgical System to treat early stage prostate cancer. To-date, the Department has performed more than 200 such procedures, the largest series in Far East Asia. The Department also managed to shorten a patient's length of hospital stay with no compromise on patient safety - from an average of 3-4 days in 2003 to 2 days in 2006.

To commemorate the achievements, the Department is organising a celebration and get-together with its Uro-oncology survivors at the Shangri-La Hotel Ballroom, Sunday, 4 March at 12pm. A/Prof Christopher Cheng, Head, Department of Urology will be lighting a celebratory cake using the da Vinci Robot to showcase the very fine movements of the robot.

Support for Uro-Oncology Patients

The Department will also be launching a Patient Support Group overseen by medical professionals to provide psychological and social support for Uro-oncology patients. Currently the Group has 20 members. Besides quarterly counselling workshops and regular talks, the Group will also be raising funds for needy patients.

"When I was first diagnosed with prostate cancer, I was very shocked and lost. Seeking the opinions of different doctors was helpful but I desperately needed to talk to someone who shared a similar experience. It is very heartening to know that uro-oncology patients will now have a support group to turn to. They no longer have to suffer in silence," shared Dr Sim, 70-year old prostate cancer survivor, part-time Orthodontist Consultant.

We would like to invite your reporter and photographer / camera crew to join us in our celebration.

Media Contact:
CHIO Shu Yu
Executive, Communications
Tel: 6321 4851, Mobile: 8125 1708, Email: chio.shu.yu@sgh.com.sg
CELEBRATING 200 CASES OF KEYHOLE PROSTATECTOMIES USING DA VINCI & LAUNCH OF URO-ONCOLOGY SUPPORT GROUP

Date: 4 March, Sunday
Time: 12.00pm
Venue: The Shangri-La Hotel, Ballroom

Programme:

12.00pm - 12.05pm: Welcome by A/Prof Christopher Cheng
   Head & Snr Consultant, Department of Urology, SGH

12.05pm - 12.30pm: Luncheon

12.30pm - 12.45pm: da Vinci Robotic Surgical System in action

12.45pm - 1.20pm: Launch of Uro-oncology Patient Support Group

1.20pm - 1.40pm: Tokens of Appreciation to Urology Be-frienders

1.40pm - 2.00pm: Launch of Fund Raising Effort in support of Urology Research

About Prostate Cancer:
Prostate cancer occurs when the cells in the prostate gland grow uncontrollably, forming a lump that gradually increases in size to block the urinary pathway. Early prostate cancer is usually without any symptoms and may be picked up incidentally during a routine examination of the anus and rectum. The appropriate course of treatment, which depends on the prognosis of the patient, may include surgery, radiation therapy, hormonal therapy or chemotherapy.

About Robot-assisted Laparoscopic Radical Prostatectomy (LRP):
Radical Prostatectomy refers to the removal of the entire prostate gland. This operation is performed for treatment of early state prostate cancer. Robot assisted LRP is performed through 5 to 6 small 1-cm keyhole incisions across the lower abdomen, using the da Vinci Robotic Surgical System. The da Vinci is a highly sophisticated robot system, which mimics the surgeon’s vision and hand movements, allowing the surgeon to perform precise surgery in complex procedures through small surgical incisions.

About Dr Sim:
Dr Sim was diagnosed with early stage prostate cancer in August 1999. The news came as a terrible shock to him because he has been leading a healthy and active lifestyle. He approached different doctors for their opinions on the best treatment option and ended up feeling confused. He asked to join a support group at SGH but there was none at that time. Dr Sim's personal experience made him realise that speaking to someone who shared a similar experience would help to put his fears into a better perspective. After his surgery, he volunteered to be a listening ear to fellow prostate cancer patients. Despite his busy schedule, the grandfather of two has helped to counsel 6 patients and one of them became his very good friend.