

SURGICAL PROCEDURES

Transanal Endoscopic Microsurgery

Hospital is first in three-state region to perform new procedure

By Cynthia Hawkins



Ravinder Annamaneni,
M.D.

MOST PATIENTS ARE understandably uncomfortable when faced with the prospect of colorectal surgery. But a less invasive surgical technique practiced by local surgeon Ravinder Annamaneni, M.D., offers less pain, faster recovery and fewer complications than traditional surgery.

While traditional procedures required a large open incision technique, Transanal Endoscopic Microsurgery (TEM) is a minimally invasive surgical technique for removing certain tumors from the rectum. The surgeon uses a device to dilate the rectum with gas so that surgery can be performed through the anus. He then uses a proctoscope with a diameter of four centimeters and a reach of up to 20 centimeters to maneuver instruments in the small operating field of the anal canal. It is basically an extension of advanced laparoscopic rectal surgery.

"Major rectal surgery carries a risk of morbidity and mortality, particularly in elderly and unfit patients," says Dr. Annamaneni.

"Rectal surgery carries the risk of having to have a colostomy, which in some cases may be permanent. This can be hard to accept and difficult to manage for most patients. With the advent of TEM, the need for a colostomy is rare and unlikely.

While the procedure may be new to patients in our area, Dr. Annamaneni has plenty of experience. He did a Minimally Invasive Colorectal and Advanced Rectal Cancer Management fellowship at Philadelphia for a year and trained to do these procedures on a regular basis. He is also the first and only physician in North Carolina, South Carolina or Virginia to have performed TEM, according to officials.

"During my fellowship in Philadelphia, we treated patients from all over the country. I also did a colorectal fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York."

One of the main benefits of TEM is that an abdominal operation (anterior resection of the rectum) is avoided. This means that patients

who are candidates for TEM can avoid traditional open surgery and abdominal incisions.

"After the operation, the patient can drink and eat immediately and can receive oral pain medication without the need for parenteral opiates," he says.

TEM is especially useful for patients who have small and early cancers of the rectum. Patients with benign, non-cancerous tumors that are too large or not amenable to colonoscopic excision are also excellent candidates for the procedure.

TEM can spare some patients the risks and side effects of major rectal surgery.

Dr. Annamaneni is excited to be able to offer the procedure in our community.

"TEM is not widely available," he says. "Until recently, we had to refer these patients to different hospitals. Now we have the facility and expertise available locally!" MIR