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EXCELA ENHANCES ROBOT-ASSISTED SURGERY CAPABILITIES

Complex Minimally Invasive Procedures Across Multiple Disciplines Offered by 17 Surgeons Within Health System

LATROBE, PA, January 17, 2020 … For more than a decade, surgeons at Excela Health have been performing robot-assisted surgery at Excela Latrobe Hospital. A recent upgrade to the hospital's *da Vinci*® Surgical System ensures the latest tools and techniques are available to Excela Health patients across the health system.

The *da Vinci*® Xi by Intuitive offers the most advanced instrumentation, greater versatility and flexibility and is ideal for a variety of complex procedures. Considered a fourth-generation computerized surgical manipulation system within the Intuitive suite, it includes multi-functional instruments that are inspired by the human hand, but with a greater range of motion for fully wristed dexterity and surgical precision.

"Latrobe Hospital was one of the first hospitals in Western Pennsylvania to start a robotic surgical program," noted Michael Szwerc, MD, thoracic surgeon, and medical director of Excela's robotic program. "Because of the surgery volume and complexity of procedures being performed at Latrobe, it became necessary to upgrade the robotic system to the newest generation of systems available."

Given the demonstrated patient benefit since the first robot was put into service at Excela Latrobe Hospital in 2009, Excela Health purchased a second surgical robot for Excela Westmoreland Hospital in 2014. This $1.8 million upgrade, funded in part by the Latrobe Area Hospital Charitable Foundation, mirrors that robotic capability.

As a result of robot-assisted surgery, patients experience less blood loss and smaller scars from the dime-sized incisions which contribute to shorter hospitalizations, quicker recovery and less postoperative discomfort. Dubbed "Intelligent Surgery," this capability also

creates a more efficient operating room, allowing for greater flexibility in procedure scheduling, which benefits patients and the care team alike.

At Excela Health, 17 surgeons in a variety of specialties perform robot-assisted surgery. The technology is widely used for prostate surgery, gynecologic surgery (including hysterectomy and uterine fibroids), thoracic surgery, general surgery (including hernia, small bowel resection and others), and surgeries for various types of cancer. In 2019, nearly 650 surgeries were performed robotically, with gynecologic and thoracic surgeries the most common.

“Robot-assisted surgery is another example of Excela Health’s commitment to remain a leader in offering new and better ways to care for our patients,” said Carol J. Fox, MD, FAAFP, chief medical officer, Excela Health. “This technology is one of many minimally invasive and general surgery techniques used by Excela surgeons to achieve the best results for their patients.

“Having this resource available also aids in the recruitment of new surgeons to our community,” added Dr. Fox. “Today’s surgeons are training with robotic tools and are expecting to find them where they choose to practice. This is an investment in the vitality of our community and its appeal to future healthcare providers.”

Case in point: Among the most recent additions to Excela Health Surgical Specialists with offices at Excela Square at Latrobe is Ryan Abegglen, MD, who includes colorectal, gall bladder and hiatal hernia among his robot-assisted slate of surgeries. Dr. Abegglen came to Excela Health in the summer of 2019 after completing a General Surgery residency at UPMC Mercy, where his five-year program integrated laparoscopic, endoscopic and robotic training.

Using robot-assisted technology, the surgeon operates seated at a console while viewing the surgical field as a three-dimensional image that vastly enhances depth perception. Below the display, the surgeon manipulates master controls that work like forceps, and the system translates those hand, wrist and finger movements into precise, real-time movements inside the patient through miniaturized surgical instruments attached to robotic “arms.”