

Breakthrough procedure helps patients with throat, mouth cancer

September 1 2011, By Jason Cody

(Medical Xpress) -- A new robotic procedure performed by a Michigan State University physician at Lansing's Sparrow Hospital could vastly improve the quality of life and recovery time for patients who suffer from throat and mouth cancers.

Sparrow is the only hospital in mid-Michigan to offer trans-oral [robotic surgery](#), which is performed by Sparrow and MSU Health Team physician Barry Wenig, director of otolaryngology, [head and neck surgery](#) at MSU.

During the procedure, Wenig - sitting at a console a few feet from the operating table - uses his hands and feet to manipulate the arms of a robotic instrument in a patient's mouth and throat. A video screen allows the physician to get a more precise look at the patient's tumor, and the robotic equipment permits easier access and removal of the tumor than traditional methods.

"This approach is very effective and can minimize the patient's discomfort after the surgery," Wenig said. "The instrumentation that's been developed for this can expose the area around the tumor far greater than any other magnification used in surgery."

A mid-Michigan man is an example of how successful trans-oral robotic surgery can be.

Lynwood Egbert, 76, of Elsie swore he would never go through the

difficult struggle his late wife did in battling cancer. Egbert had trans-oral robotic surgery in May to remove a tumor from his tongue.

"This was very easy," he said. "There was relatively no pain."

The procedure also requires a much smaller [incision](#) than the traditional approach, which usually involves a large incision of the jaw and a far greater [recovery time](#) and impact on the patient's ability to speak.

Provided by Michigan State University

Citation: Breakthrough procedure helps patients with throat, mouth cancer (2011, September 1) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

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