

Robotic surgeries up, but cost questions remain

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(HealthDay)—Use of robotic surgery is continuing to increase,

according to a research letter published in the Aug. 28 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Christopher P. Childers, M.D., and Melinda Maggard-Gibbons, M.D., both from the University of California in Los Angeles, retrieved financial statements from Intuitive Surgical Inc. (Form 10-K annual reports; January 1999 to December 2017) and extracted data for robot system sales, revenue sources (systems, service, instruments, and accessories), and approximate procedure volumes by specialty (gynecology, general surgery, urology). Intuitive Surgical is the supplier of most surgical [robotic platform](#) technology.

Based on the company data, the researchers found that total revenue in 2017 was \$3.1 billion, with \$2.3 billion from the United States. More than half of revenue (52 percent) was derived from instruments and accessories, 29 percent from robot systems, and 19 percent from service. Estimated annual procedure volume reached 877,000 in 2017, up from 136,000 in 2008. It is estimated that in 2017 the cost per procedure was \$3,568, with \$1,866 for instruments and accessories, \$1,038 for [robot systems](#), and \$663 for the service contract.

"The continued use of the robotic platform in surgery requires demonstrating the superior clinical benefit of these devices while considering the full set of costs for these systems," the authors write.

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