

Advances in Lung Cancer Treatment

Video-assisted surgeries are reducing post-operative pain and shortening hospitalizations



"This procedure shortens hospitalization and contributes to greater patient satisfaction," says Dr. Abraham.

Patients considering lung cancer surgery can now count on Fountain Valley Regional Hospital for a minimally invasive procedure called video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery (VATS).

The lungs are made of five lobes, and when disease makes it necessary to remove a lobe (lobectomy), surgeons typically enter the chest with large incisions that require spreading the ribs. The surgery is highly invasive.

Now, thanks to miniaturization technologies, physicians have been offered specialized surgical equipment that reduces chest wall trauma, scarring and post-operative pain. "The VATS lobectomy shortens hospitalization and contributes to greater patient satisfaction," states Reginald G. Abraham, M.D., the hospital's Medical Director.

Only three or four small incisions are required to gain entrance to the chest cavity when performing a VATS lobectomy. "The technique not only advances patient care levels but represents a skill set that thoracic surgeons are striving to acquire," comments Dr. Abraham, who champions



the new technique because of its patient benefits.

During the procedure, the surgeon inserts a small video camera (a thoroscope) and specialized surgical instruments into the incisions. The camera transmits images to a computer monitor, which guides surgeons as they remove the target tissue. In addition, in patients with early stage cancer, the technology can be used in the removal and biopsy of lymph nodes in the mid-chest area. This helps determine if a cancer is localized or has spread, and reduces the amount of discomfort for the patient.

According to Dr. Abraham, any patient that requires a traditional lobectomy would be a good candidate for the new procedure, as long as the cancer has not spread to other parts of the body. (Generally, that means patients with Stage I non-small cell lung cancer or patients with a single enlarging pulmonary nodule.)

Dr. Abraham is hopeful that once people learn that

this procedure is available, they will be less reluctant to seek care or follow up on a particular diagnosis. He explains, "Many people are frightened to approach physicians about possible lung cancer, because of a long history of tobacco usage. Also, some people diagnosed with lung cancer may not want to pursue the more definitive treatment that involves surgery. Instead, they might pursue a course that doesn't have as substantial an outcome as what surgery provides. When they learn about this procedure—which is less invasive but still offers the standard of care—they may be less reticent about following up."

The VATS lobectomy is a potent weapon in the battle against lung cancer, putting Fountain Valley Regional Hospital among those at the vanguard of the ongoing struggle against the disease. For more information about any of our extensive cancer, heart and vascular treatment services, please call us at **(714) 979-1408**.



ORANGE COUNTY
Regional Cancer Center