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Robotic relief for Lucknow woman

New Delhi, Sunday April 22 2012 : Haya Fatima (20), an engineering student from Lucknow, suffered from a rare neuro-muscular disease called myasthenia gravis that used to make it difficult for her even to smile; her eyes would also droop involuntarily.

The condition is generally treated with an open surgery but it leaves a big scar from under the neck up to upper abdomen. Fatima, however, had a robotic procedure that was performed with just eight incisions to insert the arms of the robot. Surgeons at the Institute of Robotic Surgery at Sir Gangaram Hospital are now excited about the possibilities of doing complex surgeries with robotic technology.

Fatima consulted some of the leading hospitals but did not feel confident about an open surgery. "Doctors told me that open surgery is going to be painful and there was no surety whether my condition would improve. Initially, we were not aware that robotic surgery was available for my condition. Later, I found out that this surgery could be done without much scarring and pain," she said.

According to the director of the institute, Dr Arvind Kumar, an open surgery for myasthenia gravis will involve fracturing the rib bones to get to the thymus gland that has to be operated upon. "It usually leaves an ugly scar and unmarried, young women are weary of getting it done. But through robotics, we managed to reach the thymus gland without fracturing any rib bone. One cannot see any incision mark or scar from outside. She is also able to walk around and even prepare for her exams within 48 hours of the surgery," he said. Another patient of myasthenia gravis, Pallavi Mittal (22), was also operated upon the same way.

The team of surgeons involved with the surgery claimed on Friday that they had also performed the first vascular surgery with robotics in Asia. The surgeries were performed on two patients in their 40s suffering from atherosclerosis or blockage in arteries. Both used to experience extreme pain in their legs as the blood was not able to reach the legs due to the block. They were barely able to walk a hundred metres without pain.

"The surgery of blood vessels can be tricky. We have to join an artificial graft to the aorta that needs specialized suturing skills. Even a small mistake can lead to litres of blood loss. But the vascular surgeries with robotics have been successful and precise," said Kumar. As part of the robotic surgery, six incisions of 8mm were made.

Ref : Times of India

