



Keyhole surgery unlocks new doors

By Heather Bloom

Dr Declan Murphy, Associate Professor at Melbourne University and Director of Robotic Surgery at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, is currently pioneering the use of Robotic Assisted Surgery (RAS) in an attempt to garner awareness of men's health issues.

Hailing from the Emerald Isle, Dr. Murphy, a specialist in urology, originally came to Melbourne in 2008 to complete a fellowship, however the Australian lifestyle and opportunity to direct a robotic surgery program for Peter Mac was far too tempting and very quickly he and his family settled in Melbourne.

Moving to the other side of the world and completely changing his "life plan" has proved a positive step, not just for Dr. Murphy but also for the Australian medical industry. His work on RAS has opened up a new world in surgical procedures benefiting both doctors and patients. Speaking about the advanced equipment, Dr Murphy says,

"Robotic assisted surgery is a form of keyhole surgery that is less invasive. Doctors can make far smaller incisions during the procedure, ensuring patients have a quicker recovery period. At Peter Mac we try to push the boundaries of keyhole surgery, by using the robot we are simply using an advanced piece of surgical equipment.

"Robotic assisted surgery also allows for far more complicated procedures to be carried out. A medical professional controls the robot remotely and we can watch on a 3D viewing box to see what's happening."

Dr Murphy's advanced surgical techniques couldn't come at more urgent time.

"Australia and New Zealand have the highest number of prostate cancer cases in the world, 20,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year in Australia alone."

A unique feature of prostate cancer means that of all the men diagnosed, many may not even need treatment. Peter Mac offers many different treatment plans, one of which is "active surveillance." Some particularly slow growing can-

cers, monitored over time, do not affect the patient with any cancerous symptoms.

"Prostate cancer is an unusual form of cancer, it's not like breast cancer. You can actually have a tiny bit of cancer

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- Dr. Declan Murphy

in the prostate. Choosing the "active surveillance" form of treatment can be difficult for patients to accept and we don't take chances with them, but the non-surgical route is often the best course of action."

Statistics state that 60 to 70% of men over 40 years of age will have some traces of prostate cancer, but this small amount cancer is unlike to kill or cause any symptoms to the patients. Dr. Murphy has found that most patients are able to live with the cancer rather than die from it.

Australians appear to have a better understanding and awareness of their health, and in general are attempting to live a healthier lifestyle, but there is still a long way to go in increasing the awareness of men's health.

One of the documented problems with men's health is they often do not spend enough time thinking about their physical and mental well-being. While it seems men are more comfortable discussing obesity and cardiac problems with their GP, urological problems and cancer are still taboo. Through reaching out to the wives and partners of men, doctors can make contact with their target audience.

"The main message we are trying to get out is that men need to better informed."

It seems the old saying "fore-



Dr Murphy in the driver's seat

warned is forearmed" rings true, and Dr. Murphy is using all the tools at his disposal to help beat prostate cancer which kills 3,500 Australian men each year. His research into RAS and expertise in the field of urology is leading the way into better health for all Aussie blokes.

A few of Dr. Murphy's favourite things:
Best Café in Melbourne: Chapel Bakery on Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn
Favourite Restaurant: St Katherine's in Kew
Favourite Movie: The Hunt For Red October

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