

Bariatrics program, robotic surgeries ramping up at Alton Memorial

If you're one of the many people struggling with excess weight or obesity, a new bariatrics program at Alton Memorial Hospital offers renewed hope so you can



Musielak

achieve your long-term health goals and live a healthy, active life. Dr. Matt Musielak, a BJC Medical Group general surgeon on staff at AMH, is offering sleeve gastrectomies for patients who meet certain guidelines, such as a Body Mass Index of more than 40. But the surgical procedure is just part of a robust process that also include visits with a dietitian as well as a mental health professional to make sure all the patient's needs are met. "We certainly have a lot of interest in doing this," Musielak said. "Most insurance companies require six to nine months before the surgery is done. And the work with the dietitian and mental health professional is extremely valuable, as this is a big commitment on the patient's part. And this usually requires the patient to be seen every month leading up to the procedure by his or her primary care physician or by the surgeon." Musielak said that merely dropping excess weight is not the primary goal of the program. "This will help them with co-morbidities, such as type 2 diabetes," he said. "The obesity, and those accompanying conditions, are depriving people of their health and quality of life."

The bariatrics program is designed to reset the amount of food and energy stored in the body. By resetting this trigger, the body will start getting rid of excess fat instead of preserving it. The end result is a substantial weight loss and resolution to other common problems associated with obesity. The surgical procedure, done laparoscopically, is a sleeve gastrectomy, which sleeves off 80 percent of the stomach, transforming the stomach from a football shape to one more resembling a banana. "This results in the ability to consume much smaller meals and, more importantly, resets the fat storage set point at a much lower level," Musielak said. "They are on a bariatric clear liquid diet for two weeks before the surgery. "But so much of it is their frame of mind as well as maintaining a good diet. That's why the dietitian and mental health professional are a big part of this. If patients just think the surgery itself will take care of everything, they will not succeed. As the program progresses, we would also hope to have a support group where these patients can share things like how food tastes different after the procedure." Kate Zimmerman, a dietitian with Morrison Food & Nutrition at AMH, is ready to help. "Proper nutrition is critical for success when undergoing this significant lifestyle change," she said. "We will provide each patient with individualized guidance to meet their long-term goals." "This is a procedure that is needed in a lot of rural communities," Musielak said. "So, it's good that we can offer this in Alton for some people who might not

want to go over to St. Louis for it. If we can help them not have to do that, it's a big help."

AMH going robotic with certain surgeries

Alton Memorial Hospital is taking a significant leap ahead with the addition of the da Vinci X Surgical System. Dr. Christopher Aldridge and Dr. Matthew Musielak, general surgeons with Alton Surgery, as well as urologist Dr. Arjun Sivaraman of Washington University Physicians of Illinois Inc. have been performing robotic surgeries at AMH since the start of 2020. "The arrival of the da Vinci surgical system at AMH means that access to minimally invasive procedures is increased," says Aldridge. "The technology allows operations that once required a large incision to be done using smaller ports, similar to conventional laparoscopy. The robot translates the surgeon's movements through a variety

of wristed instruments with greatly-improved binocular visualization. Specifically, we previously had to take patients to St. Louis for some procedures which can now be done at AMH." For the patient, the main advantages are a decrease in post-operative pain, less bleeding, a quicker recovery time and less use of narcotics. The surgeries done so far have mostly been hernias for the general surgeons and nephrectomies (kidneys) and prostatectomy (removal of the prostate) for Sivaraman. "The surgeon is at a console in the operating room," said Cathy Wagner, manager of Surgical Services at AMH. "There is a patient cart and a video tower where the rest of the surgery team can see what the surgeon is doing and assist. It's much less invasive for the patient, which helps decrease the pain after the procedure and quickens the recovery time." By enabling efficient access throughout the abdomen or chest, the da Vinci X System, expands upon core da Vinci System features, including wristed instruments, intuitive motion, and an ergonomic design. The surgeon is 100 percent in control of the system, which translates his/her hand movements into smaller, more precise movements of tiny instruments inside the patient's body. The surgeons will determine which procedures are best suited for the robotic system. For more information about the bariatrics program, call Alton Surgery at (618) 462-3191. For robotics, call Alton Surgery at (618) 462-3191 or Sivaraman's office at (618) 463-7174. Alton Surgery is a part of BJC Medical Group, a multi-specialty physician group.



Aldridge



Sivaraman

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Alton Memorial Hospital offers personalized paths for each patient during their weight loss journey including, non-invasive technology — so you get on the road to recovery faster. And because we're part of BJC HealthCare, we're connected to the region's top specialists and hospitals. It's the world's best medicine right where you live.



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