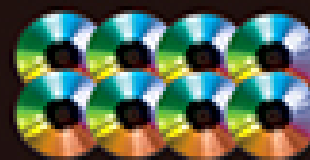


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# Operative Obstetrics & Gynecology

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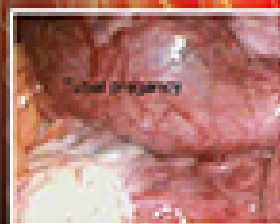
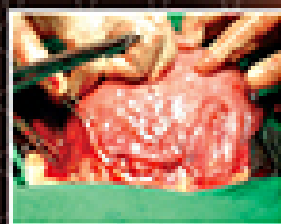
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# Contents

## SECTION 1: GENERAL

<b>1. Historical Perspective: Last Five Decades</b> <i>Mahendra N Parikh</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>10. Operation Theater Setup</b> <i>Nidhi Gupta, PL Gautam, Avtar Singh</i>	<b>99</b>
<b>2. Future of Gynecological Surgery: Next Five Decades</b> <i>Sulbha Arora, Gautam N Allahbadia</i>	<b>8</b>	<b>11. Operation Theater Protocols, Law and Administrative Requirement for Gynecological Surgeons</b> <i>Nidhi Gupta, Sanjay Gupte, Nikhil Datar</i>	<b>105</b>
<b>3. General Care Principles in Surgery</b> <i>PK Shah, Shailesh Kore, Aparna Hegde</i>	<b>14</b>	<b>12. Preoperative Management of the Gynecologic Surgery Patient</b> <i>Sandhya Gupta, Suvarna Khadilkar, Madhu Nagpal, Rajni Sundar, C Kumar</i>	<b>109</b>
<b>4. Intravenous Fluids, Blood Products and Transfusion</b> <i>Reena Srivastava</i>	<b>24</b>	12.1 Preoperative Management of the Gynecologic Surgery Patient <i>Sandhya Gupta</i>	<b>109</b>
<b>5. Incisions and Sutures</b> <i>Randhir Puri</i>	<b>32</b>	12.2 Postoperative Management <i>Suvarna Khadilkar</i>	<b>118</b>
<b>6. Perioperative Assessment and Drugs: Antibiotics, Analgesics, Others</b> <i>Vinay Tiwari, Veena Chandra</i>	<b>42</b>	12.3 Postoperative Complications <i>Madhu Nagpal</i>	<b>123</b>
<b>7. Analgesia for Obstetrics and Postoperative Case Principles</b> <i>Vinay Tiwari</i>	<b>56</b>	12.4 Postoperative Analgesia <i>Rajni Sundar, C Kumar</i>	<b>130</b>
<b>8. Anesthesia for Obstetrics and Gynecology Surgery</b> <i>Vinay Tiwari</i>	<b>64</b>	<b>13. Postoperative Infections</b> <i>Kavita N Singh</i>	<b>133</b>
8.1 Anesthesia for Gynecological Endoscopic Surgery <i>Vinay Tiwari</i>		<b>14. Sepsis</b> <i>Randhir Puri, V Chandra, Umesh Gupta</i>	<b>138</b>
8.2 Anesthesia for the Pregnant Patient Undergoing Nonobstetric Surgery <i>Vinay Tiwari</i>		14.1 Sepsis in Obstetrics <i>Randhir Puri, V Chandra</i>	<b>138</b>
8.3 Anesthesia for Cesarean Delivery <i>Vinay Tiwari</i>	<b>84</b>	14.2 Pulmonary Embolism <i>Umesh Gupta</i>	<b>147</b>
8.4 Postoperative Care <i>Vinay Tiwari</i>	<b>89</b>	<b>15. Postoperative Nutrition</b> <i>Maninder Ahuja</i>	<b>154</b>
<b>9. Intraoperative Investigative Tools</b> <i>Randhir Puri, V Chandra</i>	<b>93</b>	<b>16. Physiotherapy in Postoperative Gynecological Surgery</b> <i>Maninder Ahuja</i>	<b>158</b>
		<b>17. Grafts in Gynecological Surgery</b> <i>Maninder Ahuja</i>	<b>163</b>

## SECTION 2: OBSTETRICS

<b>18. Labor Room Operative Procedures</b> <i>SN Daftary</i>	<b>171</b>	<b>26. Peripartum Hysterectomy</b> <i>Alka Saraswat</i>	<b>235</b>
<b>19. Induction and Augmentation Labor</b> <i>Uday Thanawala, Kartik Bhagat</i>	<b>176</b>	<b>27. Bladder Injuries and Other Complications</b> <i>MS Agrawal, Sumit Bansal</i>	<b>241</b>
<b>20. Operative Principles of Fetal Malpositions and Malpresentations</b> <i>Shyam Desai</i>	<b>188</b>	<b>28. Cesarean Section</b> <i>Sukumar Barik, Narayan Jana, Ashis Kumar Mukhopadhyay</i>	<b>250</b>
<b>21. Operative Delivery</b> <i>Subhas Nargolkar, Mitra Sexena</i>	<b>191</b>	<b>29. Ectopic Pregnancy—Surgical Management</b> <i>Sadhana Desai, Partha Guha Roy</i>	<b>260</b>
<b>22. Repair of Tears: Vaginal, Perineal and Cervical</b> <i>Alka Kriplani, Sumana G</i>	<b>202</b>	<b>30. Laparoscopy and Obstetrical Practice</b> <i>Col Krishan Kapur</i>	<b>265</b>
<b>23. Manual Removal of Placenta</b> <i>Nidhi Gupta</i>	<b>210</b>	<b>31. Prenatal Diagnostic Procedures</b> <i>Nutan Agarwal, Deepika Deka</i>	<b>271</b>
<b>24. Uterine Rupture, Scar Dehiscence and Uterine Inversion</b> <i>Saroj Singh, Mohita</i>	<b>217</b>	<b>32. Fetal Surgery</b> <i>Deepika Deka</i>	<b>277</b>
<b>25. Postpartum Hemorrhage—Surgical Interventions</b> <i>Pankaj Desai, Hemant Deshpande</i>	<b>224</b>		

## SECTION 3: GYNECOLOGY

<b>33. Perioperative Measures and Positioning the Patient for Surgery</b> <i>Randhir Puri</i>	<b>288</b>	<b>37.2 Hymenorrhaphy and Hymenoplasty</b> <i>Narendra Malhotra, Neharika Malhotra Bora</i>	<b>318</b>
<b>34. Suture and Choice with Abdominal Wall Closures</b> <i>Kusum Gupta, Anupam Gupta</i>	<b>294</b>	<b>37.3 Bartholin's Gland—Incision, Drainage, Marsupialization and Gland Excision</b> <i>Neeta Singh</i>	<b>322</b>
<b>35. Hemostasis and Drains</b> <i>Randhir Puri, V Chandra</i>	<b>300</b>	<b>37.4 Nerve Denervation—Alcohol and Cortisone Injection</b> <i>Randhir Puri, V Chandra</i>	<b>326</b>
<b>36. Abortions</b> <i>Ajita Mandlekar, Usha R Krishna</i>	<b>309</b>	<b>37.5 Wide Local Excision of the Vulva, Z-Plasty Flap</b> <i>Randhir Puri, V Chandra</i>	<b>329</b>
<b>36.1 Termination of Early Pregnancy by Medical Methods</b> <i>Ajita Mandlekar, Usha R Krishna</i>	<b>309</b>	<b>37.6 Vulvectomy</b> <i>Malini KV</i>	<b>332</b>
<b>36.2 Second Trimester—Termination of Pregnancy</b> <i>Usha R Krishna</i>	<b>312</b>	<b>37.7 Surgical Management of Solid Vulvar Tumors</b> <i>Ashwini Bhalerao-Gandhi, Murad E Lala, Bimal Mody</i>	<b>342</b>
<b>37. Vulva</b> <i>Prabha Malhotra, Neharika Malhotra Bora, Narendra Malhotra, Neeta Singh, Randhir Puri, V Chandra, Malini KV, Ashwini Bhalerao-Gandhi, Murad E Lala, Bimal Mody</i>	<b>315</b>	<b>38. Vagina</b> <i>MS Urala, SS Trivedi, Suchitra Pandit, Barun Sarkar, Swaraj Batra, S Singh, Lakhbir Dhaliwal, SK Rath, Phool Chandra, Jasleen</i>	<b>348</b>
<b>37.1 Labial Fusion Release/Incision</b> <i>Prabha Malhotra, Neharika Malhotra Bora</i>	<b>315</b>	<b>38.1 Excision of Transverse Vaginal Septum</b> <i>MS Urala</i>	<b>348</b>

38.2	Vaginectomy and Episiotomy or Stenotic Release Surgery or Stricture Release	355	40.3	Salpingo-oophorectomy	450
	<i>SS Trivedi</i>			<i>Tamkeen Rabbani</i>	
38.3	Anterior Colporrhaphy/ Cystocele Repair	361	40.4	Tubal Sterilization Procedures	454
	<i>Suchitra Pandit</i>			<i>Usha Sharma</i>	
38.4	Le Fort Surgery (Closure of Outlet)	367	40.5	Ovarian Wedge Resection	463
	<i>Barun Sarkar</i>			<i>Mandakini Parihar, Shilpa Mangal</i>	
38.5	Rectovaginal/Urethrovaginal Fistula Repair	369	40.6	Ovarian Cystostomy/Cystectomy	469
	<i>Swaraj Batra, S Singh</i>			<i>Atul Munshi, Sujal Munshi</i>	
38.6	Vaginoplasty	380	40.7	Tubal Recanalization	472
	<i>Lakshbir Dhaliwal</i>			<i>Parimala Devi</i>	
38.7	Sacropexy and Colpopexy	386			
	<i>SK Rath</i>		41. Uterus		478
38.8	Uterovaginal Prolapse: Etiology, Management with Anterior Abdominal Sling Surgery	392		<i>Rajyashri Sharma, Zehra Mohsin, CN Purandare, Madhuri A Patel, Atul Munshi, Sujal Munshi, Harshad Parasnis, SS Sheth, Michael Stark, Sandro Gerli, Gian Carlo Di Renzo, PB PaiDhungat, Gautam N Allahbadia, Rajalaxmi Walavalkar, Nikhil Purandare, DK Tank, JD Tank, NS Sreedevi</i>	
	<i>Phool Chandra, Jasleen</i>		41.1	Surgical Methods of Abortion— Dilatation and Curettage or Evacuation	478
39. Cervix		400		<i>Rajyashri Sharma, Zehra Mohsin</i>	
	<i>Surveen Ghumman, Sonia Kamboj, Jaideep Malhotra, Narendra Malhotra, Chandrawati, Priti Kumar, Mala Arora, Vandana Walvekar, Geetha D Balsarkar, Nidhi Gupta, Kamal Gupta, VL Lahiri, Manashi Ray</i>		41.2	Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA)	483
39.1	Cervical Biopsy and Endocervical Curettage	400		<i>CN Purandare, Madhuri A Patel</i>	
	<i>Surveen Ghumman</i>		41.3	Abdominal Hysterectomy	490
39.2	Cervical Conization	406		<i>Atul Munshi, Sujal Munshi</i>	
	<i>Sonia Kamboj</i>		41.4	Modified Radical Hysterectomy	497
39.3	Cervical Incompetence— McDonald's Suture	409		<i>Harshad Parasnis</i>	
	<i>Jaideep Malhotra, Narendra Malhotra</i>		41.5	Vaginal Hysterectomy	503
39.4	Fothergill's Repair	418		<i>SS Sheth</i>	
	<i>Chandrawati, Priti Kumar</i>		41.6	The Ten Step Vaginal Hysterectomy: A Method Description	513
39.5	Trachelorrhaphy (Old Cervical Tear Repair)	423		<i>Michael Stark, Sandro Gerli, Gian Carlo Di Renzo</i>	
	<i>Mala Arora</i>		41.7	Vaginal Hysterectomy for Genital Prolapse	518
39.6	Cryosurgery	426		<i>PB PaiDhungat, Gautam N Allahbadia</i>	
	<i>Vandana Walvekar, Geetha D Balsarkar</i>		41.8	Complications Peculiar to Vaginal Hysterectomy	527
39.7	Dilatation of Cervix	428		<i>CN Purandare, Rajalaxmi Walavalkar, Nikhil Purandare</i>	
	<i>Nidhi Gupta, Kamal Gupta</i>		41.9	Technical Minutiae of Vaginal Hysterectomy	532
39.8	Application of Cytology in Obstetrics and Gynecology	431		<i>DK Tank, JD Tank</i>	
	<i>VL Lahiri, Manashi Ray</i>		41.10	Hemorrhage Following Hysterectomy	537
				<i>NS Sreedevi</i>	
40. Tubes and Ovaries		439	42. Laparoscopy		541
	<i>MB Bellad, Kavita N Singh, Monica S Chauhan, Tamkeen Rabbani, Usha Sharma, Mandakini Parihar, Shilpa Mangal, Atul Munshi, Sujal Munshi, Parimala Devi</i>			<i>Pranay Shah, Shobhana M, Mala Raj, Malvika Sabharwal, Pranay Shah, Pratap Kumar, Bimal John, Shyam Desai, Nikhil Jani, Nutan Jain, Shilpi Srivastava, Pranay R Shah, Duru Shah, Safala Shroff, Sukhpreet Patel, Mandakini Parihar, Meenakshi Bharath, Pranay R Shah, Pranay R Shah, KK Gopinathan, Fessy Louist, Shlomo B Cohen, Ariella J Setton, Daniel S Seiedman, Jayakrishnan K</i>	
40.1	Ectopic Pregnancy—Surgical Aspects	439			
	<i>MB Bellad</i>				
40.2	Salpingectomy/Salpingostomy	446			
	<i>Kavita N Singh, Monica S Chauhan</i>				

42.1A Instrumentation and Principles of Laparoscopic Surgery 541 <i>Pranay Shah</i>	43.2 Hysteroscopy in Infertility 646 <i>Nandita Palshetkar, Rishma Pai</i>
42.1B Sterilization of Laparoscopic Instruments 554 <i>Shobhana M, Mala Raj</i>	43.3 Hysteroscopic-guided Biopsy Polypectomy and Myomectomy 653 <i>Abha Majumdar, Tejshree Singh</i>
42.2 Laparoscopic Diagnostic Procedures 562 <i>Malvika Sabharwal</i>	43.4 Hysteroscopic Proximal Tubal Cannulation 663 <i>PG Paul, Tony Thomas</i>
42.3 Adhesionolysis 570 <i>Pranay Shah</i>	44. Bladder, Urethra and Incontinent Surgery 666 <i>Rooma Sinha, Sanjay Sinha</i>
42.4 Endometriosis 572 <i>Pratap Kumar, Bimal John</i>	45. Small Bowel, Colon and Appendix in Gynecological Surgery 678 <i>Lakhvinder Singh</i>
42.5 Endoscopy in Infertility 577 <i>Shyam Desai, Nikhil Jani</i>	46. Gynecologic Cancer Surgery 703 <i>SPS Kochar</i>
42.6 Myomectomy 581 <i>Nutan Jain, Shilpi Srivastava</i>	47. Surgery for Ovarian Cancer 712 <i>SPS Kochar</i>
42.7 Total Laparoscopic Hysterectomy 587 <i>Pranay R Shah</i>	47.1 Staging Laparotomy for Cancer Ovary 712 <i>SPS Kochar</i>
42.8 PCOS Surgical Management 593 <i>Duru Shah, Safala Shroff, Sukhpreet Patel</i>	47.2 Peri- and Para-aortic Lymphadenectomy 716 <i>SPS Kochar</i>
42.9 Laparoscopic Sterilization (Coagulation Rings and Clips) 606 <i>Mandakini Parihar, Meenakshi Bharath</i>	48. Omentectomy, J Flap, TRAM Flap 718 <i>Sandeep Agarwal</i>
42.10 Laparoscopic Burch Colposuspension 615 <i>Pranay R Shah</i>	49. Role of Colposcopy in Gynecology 724 <i>Reshma Rafi, Sarita Bhalerao, Usha Saraiya</i>
42.11 Laparoscopic Paravaginal Repair 622 <i>Pranay R Shah</i>	50. Overview of Assisted Reproductive Technologies Procedures 730 <i>Monesh Shah, Jaideep Malhotra</i>
42.12 Complications of Laparoscopic Surgeries: Veress Needle Injuries; Trocar Injuries; Vascular Injuries 624 <i>KK Gopinathan, Fessy Louist, Shlomo B Cohen, Ariella J Setton, Daniel S Seiedman, Jayakrishnan K</i> <i>Veress Needle Injuries 624</i> <i>KK Gopinathan, Fessy Louist</i> <i>Trocar Injuries 628</i> <i>Shlomo B Cohen, Ariella J Setton, Daniel S Seiedman</i> <i>Vascular Injuries 635</i> <i>Jayakrishnan K</i>	51. Male Infertility Surgery 750 <i>Kishore M Nadkarni</i>
43. Hysteroscopy 638 <i>Pranay Shah, Nandita Palshetkar, Rishma Pai, Abha Majumdar, Tejshree Singh, PG Paul, Tony Thomas</i>	52. Male Sterilization—Vasectomy 760 <i>KM Nadkarni, Arun Tiwari</i>
43.1 Fundamentals of Hysteroscopy: Instrumentation, Principles and Technique 638 <i>Pranay Shah</i>	53. Making of a Surgeon (A Practical Life and Guidance for Neosurgeons) 766 <i>Randhir Puri</i>
	54. Gynecological Surgery Instruments 770 <i>Sushma Gupta</i>

## SECTION 4: RECENT ADVANCES

55. Applications of Laser in Gynecology 781 <i>Narendra Malhotra, Parul Mittal, Jaideep Malhotra</i>	56. Robotic Surgery 784 <i>Narendra Malhotra, Parul Mittal, Richa Saxena</i>
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**APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix A:</b> <b>Gynecologist and Consent</b> <i>Devendra Gupta</i>		
<b>Appendix B:</b> <b>Operative Notes and Postoperative Instructions for Common Gynecological and Obstetrical Operations, Procedures</b> <i>Sanjay Gupte</i>	<b>797</b>	
<b>Appendix C:</b> <b>Application for Registration of Indian Nationals U/S 13(3) of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956</b> <i>RN Goel</i>	<b>881</b>	
		<b>Appendix D:</b> <b>Doctor's Liability Under Consumer Protection Act and Preventive Steps to Avoid Litigation and its Outcome with Important Dos and Don'ts</b> <i>Nidhi Gupta, Anurag Gupta</i>
		<b>909</b>
	<b>799</b>	<b>Appendix E:</b> <b>Instruments</b> <i>S Inamdar</i>
		<b>919</b>
		<b>Index</b>
		<b>935</b>

# Future of Gynecological Surgery: Next Five Decades

Sulbha Arora, Gautam N Allahbadia

*"Technology breeds more technology"*

—Alvin Tofler in *Future Shock*

## INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1980, traditional gynecological surgery remained unchanged for over 60 years. Following the introduction of the laparoscope in the late 1960s, its use was restricted to diagnostic and sterilization procedures. In the 1970s, Kurt Semm from Kiel pioneered operative laparoscopy. The 1980s saw the introduction of the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) laparoscopic laser. In 1988, Harry Reich performed the world's first laparoscopic hysterectomy, which subsequently broadened the appeal of this approach. By the early 1990s, the availability of surgical technological aids such as quality cameras, disposable ports, staples and electrosurgery had facilitated the progression of laparoscopic surgery into mainstream gynecology.

The marvels of electronic and information technology have strengthened the biochemical and molecular power of diagnosis and the surgical and medical management of gynecology, transforming the very practice of medical science into a reality that could barely be envisaged 2 decades ago. We now enter the age of robotics, telesurgery and therapeutic cloning. This dynamic process of progress continues to deliver practitioners with information, ideas and tools that spell answers to some of the most pressing dilemmas in clinical management today.

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The major areas of gynecological surgery today are:

- Obstetrics—antenatal, intrapartum and postpartum maternal, and fetal surgeries
- Fertility enhancing surgeries and assisted reproduction
- Oncosurgery
- Gynecologic urosurgery

- Pelvic floor and retroperitoneal surgery
- Uterine surgery: transcervical and transperitoneal.

The major developments in future, likely to impact surgical techniques, are:

- Evolution of anesthetic agents—minimal postoperative recovery time
- Advanced real-time imaging systems
- Newer generation of minimally invasive operating instruments with higher degree of automation (robotics)
- Advanced drug delivery systems for more targeted therapy
- Stem cell therapy for reconstructive therapy
- High resolution and high magnification optical imaging
- Real-time histopathology, on table in situ histology
- Immunomodulative therapy for transplants
- Newer hemostatic and tissue ablation techniques
- Telemedicine.

Apart from these, lifestyle and environmental factors are likely to play a role in determining the course of gynecological surgery in the coming 5 decades. These include:

- Increase in lifespan
- Changing lifestyles and social concepts of childbearing
- Late marriages and delayed conceptions
- Lower family sizes and evolving human relationships
- Emergent viral agents
- Environmental toxins.

## TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

Ongoing usage of nanotechnology and integration of computers in all of the fields in surgery are leaving future imprint.



## VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATORS AND ROBOTS

Advances in computer graphics, robotics and virtual reality (VR) technology have opened up new possibilities in medicine. Robots fit readily into the infrastructure of today's hospitals (Fig. 1). Users of this technology, the new generation of computer literate physicians and patients, recognize their potentials and benefits.

In developed countries, more elderly people require hospital care and fewer working-aged people are able to provide it. One solution is automation in health care. Advances in telecommunications now routinely allow surgeons to view operations taking place in distant hospitals using videoconference techniques. Adding a robot assistant to this setup allows a distant surgeon to



**Fig. 1:** Robot as in da Vinci system



**Fig. 2:** Virtual surgery

participate directly in the procedure, controlling the robot in exactly the same way as if they were in the same room.

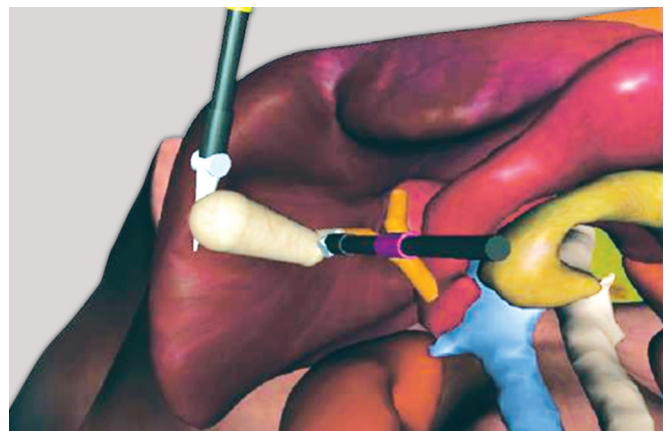
## Virtual Reality Training Systems

Virtual reality based surgical simulation systems will become even more realistic in the future. They will be integrated into multimedia teaching and training environments and all surgical disciplines will be covered.

To provide the virtual environment, a realistic three-dimensional (3D) representation of the anatomic sites is derived from two dimensional (2D) medical image data using imaging algorithms and visualization techniques (Fig. 2). Thus the surgeon is able to perform endoscopic procedures at the virtual sites (Fig. 3). By means of realistic user interface, the gynecologist is able to grasp, cut, coagulate, introduce new instruments, suture, apply clips, initiate bleeding coagulation, achieve hemostasis and retract the intestines, all in a realistic simulation scenario. A capability score can also be drawn up for each trainee for evaluation of still untrained.

## Robotic-assisted Laparoscopic Surgery

There are different types of robotic camera holding systems. Automated endoscopic system for optimal positioning (AESOP), available with hand, foot or voice control, received the robot of the year award 2000 in medical application. A surgeon can direct the articulated metal arm by voice control. The laparoscope can be moved in any of six directions—possible only with dexterity of hand. The da Vinci is another surgical system whereby it is possible to perform complex surgical procedures through 1 cm ports in a sitting position, with a so called surgical immersion technology, with the look and feel of an open surgery (Figs 4 and 5). The eyes and hands of the surgeon are completely immersed in the patient. With the da Vinci



**Fig. 3:** Virtual laparoscopic surgery from a haptic bench





1. Surgeon console
2. Image processing equipment
3. Surgical arm cart
4. Hi-resolution 3-D endoscope

**Fig. 4:** da Vinci surgical system

surgical system, the future of surgery is at our fingertips. However, the system is very expensive and not yet in widespread use.

### Intelligent Operating Rooms

In the Hermes intelligent operating room (OR1), as a road map to networked voice-controlled devices, data management and surgeon control is unified in one system (Fig. 6). The camera is controlled by an AESOP.

The second example of an intelligent OR is the OR1 from Karl Storz, which realizes the integration and central steering of different operation room components. This allows central control of all OR components, processing, capturing and mailing of all patient data for data exchange between clinics, doctors and health care staff. Radiological and histological data can also be called upon.

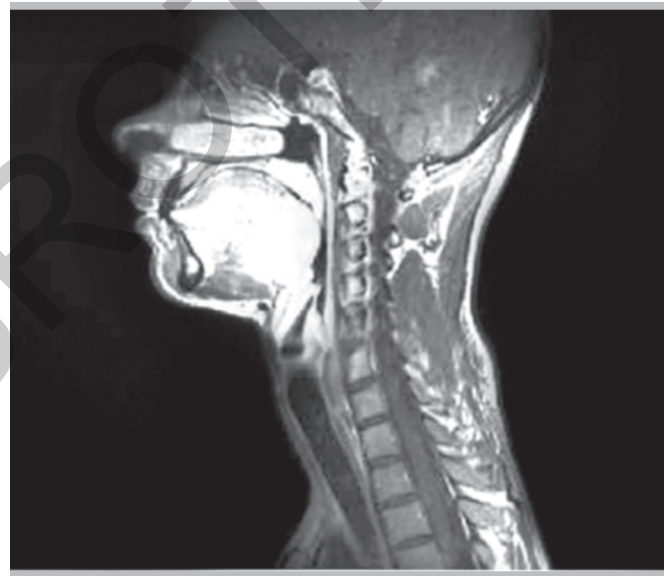
Following benefits of both these ORs are at hand: improved ergonomics, better data management, more efficient personnel utilization and optimized surgeon control.

### Newer Optics

A new imaging technology that uses directed laser or optical illumination, which is scanned at the distal end of the endoscope, has been introduced, especially for flexible endoscopes, which have limited image quality. In this technique, an alternative approach is used, called the pixel-array acquisition to scan a spot of light and detect each pixel sequentially by laser scanning or confocal microscopy. Thus, higher image quality may be obtained with this visualization technique when compared to similar diameter normal telescopes. Optical scanning technology may provide narrower telescopes with high quality images, and more space for operative instruments. Thus,



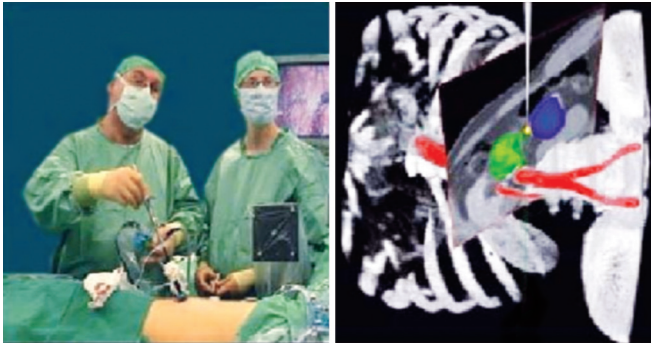
**Fig. 5:** da Vinci in use



**Fig. 6:** Hermes

thanks to such developments in the visual system, flexible telescopes may more widely be used in gynecological practice involving minimal access surgery.

Development of 3D endoscopic instruments has made clear view and perception of depth available. A specialized 3D telescope with a small, light-weight pair of glasses is required for visualization (Fig. 7). The images obtained from objects are processed by a control unit (digital image processing module, 3D scan converter, 3D video demultiplexer) and then they are displayed on the 3D monitor. The 3D vision with a perception of depth makes it easier to position instruments and structures in the area of the operation. Thus, diagnostic and operative endoscopy can be performed more easily (localization of the lesions, measurement of the size, suturing, etc.). The high-

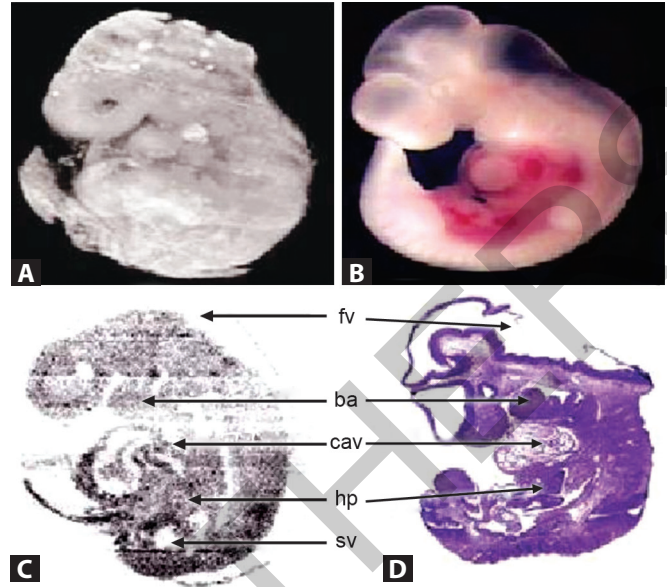


**Fig. 7:** 3D laparoscopic surgery in progress

resolution camera gives clearer image reproduction in 3D as well as 2D mode. Single axis image processing eliminates binocular contrasts and eyestrain. Polarized glasses allow more than one person to see three dimensionality. The learning curve in 3D endoscopy is shorter than its 2D counterpart because 3D modules can provide more actual and realistic views. The development of 3D technology in endoscopic applications will lead to widespread use of minimally invasive endoscopic surgeries in infertility evaluation. Increasing number of surgeons will be able to easily perform basic procedures without difficulty of orientation by means of 3D endoscopy.

Ultrasound has already been integrated into endoscopy instruments and attempts are under way to integrate magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology into telescopes. It is obvious that optics and laser-based techniques will be integrated as well. Computer-assisted diagnostics for object identification in images will be applied to telescopes for the intelligent, automated segmentation, and recognition of pathology at the organ, tissue and cellular levels. Optical technique capable of identifying tissue components and pathology, as well as obtaining microstructural images is known as optical biopsy. Optical biopsy may eliminate several current problems encountered with endoscopy.

A new optical imaging technology called “optical coherence tomography” (OCT) may prove useful in providing more information on tissue morphology during endoscopic and laparoscopic procedures (Figs 8A to D). OCT is a laser-based optical imaging technology that is somewhat analogous to ultrasound B-mode imaging. It uses a technique called “flow coherence interferometry”. The visualization of image subsurface morphology is the main potential benefit of OCT. However, a limitation of OCT is a penetration depth of only 2–3 mm. In contrast to ultrasound, tissue contact or an index-matching gel is not needed in order for images to be acquired, and scanning can be performed over large areas of tissues. For example,



**Figs 8A to D:** Optical coherence tomography of the murine embryo

endometriotic foci will be more easily recognized by OCT combined with laparoscopy.

### Pain Mapping for Endometriosis

Smaller microlaparoscopes and microinstrumentation coupled with videolaparoscopy enables the patient to be an integral part of the operation and interact with the surgeon during the laparoscopy. So dawns the age of patient-assisted laparoscopy or laparoscopy under conscious sedation. Since, the patient was the only person in the OR who knew where the pain started and where it ended, it always seemed illogical to anesthetize the patient, leaving the surgeon to tell her where the pain was, based upon what he/she saw. Initial work on mapping of pain associated with the endometriotic lesions resulted in some thought provoking findings. The classic black lesions were found to be painful in only 11% of the patients when the lesion was touched. Similarly, white lesions were painful in 20% of the patient, red in 37% and clear lesions in 32%. These results added further reason as to why initial therapy gave such poor results. Surgeons would only “see” the black lesions and remove them, but these were the least painful lesions. What became apparent next was the fact that the pain extended 28 mm beyond the visible border of the lesion onto what looked like “normal” peritoneum. Therefore, if the surgeon only removed the lesion at its border, the microscopic disease in the previously identified normal looking peritoneum would remain and the symptoms would persist or recur.

## CONCLUSION

Robotic surgical instruments give the surgeon new telesurgery opportunities such as image-guided positioning, image-augmented dexterity, sensor-guided positioning and dexterity and increased manual dexterity. As a hysteroscopic procedure, the robot-controlled endometrial resection in accordance with the exact measurement of the endometrium is certainly more optimal than manual uncontrolled resection. We are learning from the urologists who have been performing prostate resections by robots. Telescopes, rigid or flexible, are the main components of minimally invasive surgery. Technological advances in the last decade have produced thinner telescopes with good quality of vision so that many procedures, such as office hysteroscopy and laparoscopy,

and hydrolaparoscopy, may be available to the patient in the absence of general anesthesia. However, new technology will provide us with better opportunities of vision of the operative field such as 3D endoscopy. Other promising technologies, such as incorporation of ultrasonography, MRI, laser-based technology or assisted OCT, will not only enhance better visualization of the surgical field but also discriminate the pathologic tissue from the normal one, enabling the surgeon to excise the pathologic tissue accurately. Pain mapping and photodiagnosis offer a new direction in the diagnosis of microscopic endometriosis. Better detection of the disease results in higher chances of success following treatment.

Progressive technological advances are going to revolutionize gynecological surgery for ease of surgery and comfort of place in the coming few decades.

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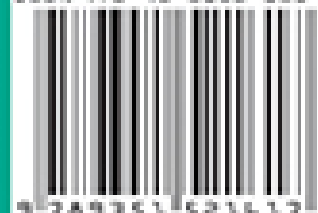
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