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Denmark couple blessed with robotic help

New technique clears way for parents' second child

By Sara Boyd
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After more than five years trying to conceive, Paul and Martina Weyde started to think their dreams of having another child were hopeless.

"I was willing to try anything," Martina Weyde said. "It was very devastating. It was always a blow to my husband and I to go month after month and find out you're still not pregnant."

Endometriosis — a condition that causes scar tissue around the uterus making it difficult to conceive — had hindered the Denmark couple's chances, said Dr. Herb Coussons, a surgeon who specializes in infertility for Bellin Health.

Coussons suggested the couple try laparoscopic surgery in order to correct the endometriosis — a procedure he would perform with the help of a surgical robot.

"I was all for it," Martina Weyde said. "I was sick of waiting. I would've done it that day if I could have."

Although she had undergone the surgery twice before without robotic assistance, Coussons said the robot, formally called the da Vinci Surgical System, would be able to remove the blockage with greater precision.

Three months to the date of her robotic-assisted surgery, Martina Weyde was finally pregnant.

"It was complete disbelief," she said. "It was very surreal. It was joy and tears. I was speechless."



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Dr. Herb Coussons holds Martina Weyde's 5-month-old daughter, Gabriella, on Friday while giving a tour of the operating room at Bellin Health, where Weyde underwent robotic-assisted surgery with the da Vinci Surgical System to correct her endometriosis. H. Marc Larson/Press-Gazette

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Paul Weyde also experienced a full gamut of emotions when that day finally came.

"I was so happy for my wife," he said. "She had to deal with the physical signs so it was such a relief. We wanted this so much."

The couple welcomed baby Gabriella, now nearly 6 months old, to their family in June — something that would not have been possible without the robotic surgery, Martina Weyde said.

"Technology is so awesome right now," she said. "I am just so thankful for Dr. Coussons and what a blessing he is to our family."

Bellin started using the machine nearly three years ago, making it the first hospital in Wisconsin to do so, Coussons said.

The robot's arms act as a surgeon's, holding medical instruments and making incisions but with more precision and dexterity, he said.

A surgeon controls the robotic arms from a console a few feet away, peering in a viewer displaying a 3-D, real-time image relayed from cameras located on the arms, Coussons said.

"When I move my hands and do whatever I do, the robot understands," he said. "The ability to give the control is phenomenal."

Patients who undergo robotic-assisted surgeries will experience less blood loss, reduced risk of complications and a shortened hospital stay, he said.

"I went home that day," Martina Weyde said of her surgery. "I was back to work in about a week."

The \$1.5 million piece of equipment has already performed more than 400 procedures, Coussons said, adding that they are one of five or six in the state to be using the technology.

St. Vincent Hospital has been using a da Vinci Surgical System since February and has since performed 90 procedures, said Paula Haseman, chief nurse executive.

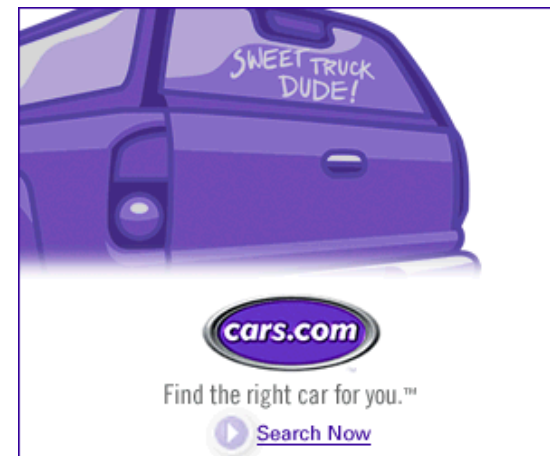
"It really is amazing," she said. "It allows for a very small incision and less pain for patients."

For 9-year-old Abi Weyde, it was the solution that brought her a new baby sister — the 29th of 31 grandchildren in the family.

Being a big sister is "very fun," she said. "She sleeps in a room right next to mine."

The Weydes said although they never planned to have their second child eight years later, they are thankful to have been given the chance.

"It's a blessing Dr. Coussons was able to fulfill our wants and dreams," Paul Weyde said, "and complete our family."



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Martina Weyde plays with daughter Gabriella on Friday. A surgical procedure with the help of a robot gave Martina and her husband a chance to have a second child — Gabriella. H. Marc Larson/Press-Gaze

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


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