First scarless surgery for urology patients

THE urology team at James Cook performed its first scarless surgery procedure in October. This advanced technique sees surgery performed through an incision in the belly button and once the belly button is sewn up only a tiny scar remains which is hardly visible. It can be used to perform various procedures on kidneys and the urinary tract with minimal cosmetic impact.

Aftab Bhatti, consultant urologist specialist in keyhole surgery said the urology department at James Cook has been working with internationally recognised expert Professor Mihir Desai and the University of Southern California to ensure it remains at the forefront of minimally invasive surgery.

“A surgeon’s ambition has always been to achieve a cure with minimum disruption to the skin and underlying muscles,” he said.

“Advances in technology have allowed us to develop keyhole surgery thanks to state-of-the-art cameras and instruments. Now things have gone one step further and these instruments have been miniaturised so that they can get through the smallest of holes. Now we can use just one cut in the belly button and achieve similar results to open surgery.”

One of the first patients to receive the treatment at James Cook was Tracey Wolf, a 37-year-old barmaid from Darlington who had her kidney repaired through an incision in her belly button. “It’s just amazing what they can do now,” she said.

“I know other people who have been left with scars and they are paranoid about them. It’s nice not to have a big scar to worry about when you go on holiday.”

When Jemma Purdy was told she would have to have her kidney removed her main concern was the size of the scar she would be left with. But the 21-year-old was lucky enough to be one of the first urology patients at James Cook to undergo scarless surgery.

Jemma of Thirsk was amazed when surgeons removed her kidney through a single incision in her belly button without leaving so much as a scar.

Jemma said: “I was really impressed with it. When I first woke up they showed me it and there was nothing there.

“It’s just amazing how they get it all out of the one hole.

“I was out of hospital the next day and I didn’t even need to take any painkillers.

“I was conscious about any scarring so I was really happy to have this surgery – it’s a real confidence booster.

“I can’t show my wound off because there’s nothing there to see!”

Friends fundraising effort

THANKS to the Friends of the Friarage’s phenomenal fundraising a fantastic £120,000 worth of the latest hi-tech equipment is benefiting urology patients at the hospital.

The flexible video cystoscopes will be used in the operating theatres to provide higher quality images and improve diagnostic procedures for bladder cancer patients and patients undergoing investigations.

The new video flexible ureterorenoscope will be useful in diagnosing and treating certain types of kidney cancers and kidney stones and avoid patients having more complex surgery in some cases.

More hospital staff will be trained to use the equipment, helping to increase the number of urology procedures carried out and decrease waiting times.

Consultant urologist, Mr Raj Gowda, said: “I am delighted we have this new equipment which will help take the urology service to the next dimension enhancing the service we provide to patients at the Friarage and further afield.”

Steve Lamb, chairman of the Friends, said: “As always the volunteers and local people who generously support us have pulled out all the stops to raise this huge amount to help their local hospital. I am proud of their efforts and glad we can make a difference by making sure the Friarage benefits from the latest technology available.”

Grateful thanks: (left to right) Steve Lamb with Emma Bradford, urology sister, Dr Fawad Arif, specialist doctor in urology, Mr Alaiyi West, consultant urologist and Mr Raj Gowda