

# M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS

## Dr. Myron Luthringer

Revolutionizing CNY Women's Surgery



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By Tricia Richards, M.S.

### ROBOTIC ASSISTANT PROVIDES IMPROVED OUTCOMES AND HIGHER PATIENT SATISFACTION

Advanced OB-GYN's newest surgical assistant has Myron Luthringer, M.D., FACOG, smiling all the way to the operating

**Jennifer Vossler manages the schedule for the da Vinci Surgical System. Dr. Luthringer says Jennifer and everyone else on staff contribute to the practice's high levels of patient satisfaction.**



PHOTO BY CHUCK WAINWRIGHT

suite. Chances are, the surgical patients are smiling, too.

They're pleased because they know the benefits of the da Vinci Surgical System, a robotic "assistant" that provides Dr. Luthringer and his colleagues with the means to perform surgical procedures with greater precision, improved range of motion and better outcomes than ever. Simply speaking, the unit enhances Dr. Luthringer's experienced surgical techniques.

Although the term "robotic" is used to describe this instrumental marvel, people shouldn't be influenced by the stereotypical association of a machine that runs on programmed instruction. The surgeon has complete control at all times, as the unit replicates his or her movements.

Peering into the da Vinci Surgical System, surgeons like Dr. Luthringer have three-dimensional, high-definition visualization and ergonomically appropriate comfort.

"I speak with all of my patients prior to surgery to explain how it works," says Dr. Luthringer, "so that the robotic perception is not an issue." During that patient-physician talk, he explains the benefits of using the da Vinci Surgical System, which he claims "is better for me and for the patient. It's not reinventing how to do surgery. It's another tool to assist me. I'm still using sound surgical skills and judgment, and the da Vinci system makes them better."

The founder of Advanced OB-GYN ([www.advancedob-gyn.com](http://www.advancedob-gyn.com)), Dr. Luthringer notes that the majority of gynecological conditions may be treated with medication or other noninvasive means. However, there are times when surgery is the most effective treatment. These conditions may include uterine fibroids, endometriosis, pelvic pain, excessive bleeding, uterine prolapse and cervical or uterine cancer.

According to the U.S. Department

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— Myron Luthringer, M.D.

of Health and Human Services ([www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)), hysterectomy is the most common female surgery. It's estimated that one in three women in the United States will have a hysterectomy before she turns 60. About two-thirds of these cases are still performed as an open procedure. In addition, there are approximately 60,000 myomectomy (fibroid removal) procedures performed annually in the United States, and another 200,000 surgical procedures for uterine or vaginal vault prolapse.

Dr. Luthringer's hope and vision is for more physicians to offer robotic-assisted surgery to avoid open incisions or laparoscopic procedures in qualified candidates whenever possible. Outcomes from the da Vinci Surgical System are so positive and consistent that Dr. Luthringer is an outspoken advocate of this technology.

Such an endorsement is rare for the surgeon who candidly admits his "hesitation toward anything new." Yet, over his 20+ years of practicing medicine, Dr. Luthringer has seen progressive change as equipment and techniques advance. With endometrial ablation, for example, laser treatment shifted to balloon placement, and now thermal mesh is his treatment of choice for excessive uterine bleeding.

Wanting the best for his patients, Dr. Luthringer performed the first laparoscopic-assisted vaginal hysterectomy in 1991 at Community General Hospital. He quickly became a fan of minimally invasive surgery and is somewhat amazed at his quick adoption of yet another method of performing procedures.

Urologists had begun using the robotic assistant for prostatectomies, and they had been encouraging Dr. Luthringer to get trained on its use in gynecology.

"I observed cases when I knew the robot was ordered," he recalls. "Then I spent eight hours a day learning the system."

Dr. Luthringer acknowledges his initial resistance, yet quickly recommends that other doctors consider a robotic alternative. "If someone told me a year ago that I'd be doing this, I'd say, 'No way!'



**Advanced OB-GYN's team approach with da Vinci Surgical System surgeons: Dr. Myron Luthringer and Dr. Jennifer Marziale**

PHOTO BY CHUCK WAINWRIGHT

I'm very old fashioned, very obsessive compulsive — I don't like change," he admits. "Now, I am totally sold [on] the da Vinci system! The best days of my week are when I'm in surgery. It's relaxing to me. I'm in my comfort zone because I'm in total control."

The esteemed physician has done "more than 50 cases using the da Vinci system. Many were complicated cases that I would not have attempted laparoscopically. The da Vinci spared these patients from requiring an open procedure."

Dr. Luthringer was able to use the 3-D camera to achieve "greater depth perception" and move the instruments within a few millimeters or centimeters. "It's so precise; I can move the camera exactly where I need it."



**Dr. Luthringer is enthusiastic about the da Vinci Surgical System. “I’m driven and I’m thankful that this is in my community,” he explains, “because I know it’s the best thing I can offer.”**

## COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL'S INVESTMENT BENEFITS REGIONAL WOMEN

Reflecting on the significant advantages for all involved, Dr. Luthringer enthusiastically and gratefully applauds Community General Hospital for enabling women in Central New York to have

### About Dr. Myron Luthringer

Dr. Myron Luthringer is Chief of Gynecological Robotic and Minimally Invasive Surgery at Community General Hospital in Syracuse, NY. He has practiced obstetrics and gynecology for nearly two decades, delivering more than 8,000 babies.

Dr. Luthringer is the leading authority on robotic surgery for benign gynecologic conditions in Central New York. He is also the first da Vinci Surgical System-certified obstetrician/gynecologist performing robotic hysterectomies and myomectomies in Syracuse. He remains on the forefront of this field by pioneering the first benign gynecological robotic surgical program in Central New York. In addition to delivering frequent lectures, he also trains surgeons in the use of the da Vinci Surgical System.

Dr. Luthringer is a graduate of Upstate Medical University, Syracuse, NY, where he also completed his residency. In addition, he completed a Felix Rutledge Fellowship at M. D. Anderson, Houston, TX.

He is a board-certified Fellow of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and serves as a consultant for Intuitive Surgical and Welch Allyn Medical.

this option.

“I feel great about the hospital for bringing in this technology. They did what’s right for the patient, and I’m so thankful,” he says.

Advanced OB-GYN draws patients from a wide geographic range in and around Central New York. Dr. Luthringer operates at Community General Hospital and also has an office in Auburn.

“I work out of Community General Hospital,” he says. “The administration provided a lot of support for the da Vinci Surgical System and made a great investment in offering it to the community. Plus, Community General Hospital has the only dedicated, experienced robotic team, and that makes a huge difference.”

Better quality of care and higher patient satisfaction levels are two reasons Dr. Luthringer is so appreciative of the hospital’s acquisition.

## About Advanced OB-GYN

### Obstetrical Care

- Comprehensive obstetrical care
- Midwifery services — Jan Beaman, CNM
- VBAC
- Multiple gestations
- High-risk evaluation

### Gynecological Care

- General gynecologic care
- Pelvic pain and endometriosis management
- Evaluation and treatment of genital prolapse
- Fibroid treatment options
- Endometrial ablation — hysterectomy alternatives
- Minimally invasive surgery
  - Advanced laparoscopic and hysteroscopic surgery
  - da Vinci Surgical System hysterectomy
  - da Vinci Surgical System myomectomy
  - da Vinci Surgical System sacrocolpopexy
- Contraceptive options
  - IUD
  - Implanon
  - The Essure procedure
- Infertility evaluation and treatment
- Menopause management

### Other Services

- BRCA analysis and management
- Gardasil HPV vaccine
- Bone density testing
- Ultrasound

Two convenient locations:

Syracuse Office  
4850 Broad Road, Suite 2C  
Phys. Office Bldg. — South  
Syracuse, NY 13215  
(315) 492-5915

Auburn Office  
Health Central  
37 W. Garden St., Suite 104  
Auburn, NY 13021  
(315) 255-5945

For more information, please visit [www.advancedob-gyn.com](http://www.advancedob-gyn.com).

“I’m driven and I’m thankful this is in my community,” he explains, “because I know it’s the best thing I can offer.”

He continues, “The da Vinci system is definitely the right thing for women. Seeing the outcomes of my patients is proof enough for me. That is the reason to be offering this, to promote this.”

## USING THE DA VINCI SURGICAL SYSTEM

While performing procedures with the robot, Dr. Luthringer remains in the operating suite in close proximity to the patient. Well trained on the use of the system, he manipulates electromechanically enhanced microinstruments in real time to locate, view, magnify and manage the surgical site. “Once the ports are positioned, I’m 6 feet away from the patient at a console, and I still have my partner, Jennifer Marziale, M.D., at the patient’s side.

“One arm of the robot can manipulate internal organs, giving an enhanced view to use two other arms just as I would my own,” he states, “but with even greater accuracy and less blood loss than a standard laparoscopic procedure.”

Dr. Luthringer tells of a case involving severe endometriosis in which the anatomy was grossly distorted due to scarring. He was able to dissect out critical structures, avoiding injury. To his delight, the patient’s blood count was the same both before and after the procedure.

With results like that, it’s no surprise that Dr. Luthringer says, “The da Vinci robot is the closest technique to performing the perfect operation.”

One of nearly 900 units being used globally, Community General Hospital’s da Vinci Surgical System supports natural eye/hand/instrument alignment, better depth of field and instrument control, and results with better outcomes than conventional “open” procedures or laparoscopic options.

## MULTIPLE BENEFITS TO SURGEONS AND PATIENTS

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While laparoscopic surgery was a significant advancement in patient care, its rigid tools limited the surgeons’ wrist movements. The next generation in surgical technology, the da Vinci Surgical System robotic device features EndoWrist instrument tips that rotate just as the human wrist does.





**Ron Cox and Kathy Corbett manage offices in Syracuse and Auburn locations.**

tools limited the surgeons' wrist movements. The next generation in surgical technology, the da Vinci Surgical System robotic device features EndoWrist instrument tips that rotate just as the human wrist does. Because of its precision and ability to help the surgeon better view the procedure site, the da Vinci Surgical System robot requires relatively tiny incisions in comparison to traditional or laparoscopic incisions.

Smaller incisions translate to a faster recovery for patients at Advanced OB-GYN. After surgery, Dr. Luthringer may require some patients to remain in the hospital overnight due to individual medical considerations, but many patients return home the same day, and most return to normal daily activity within a week or two.

"It used to be that patients were out of work for six to eight weeks, and they're now going home the same day. Most go back to work in a week, but I know of some who returned after just a few days," he reports.

Stephanie\*, age 44, recalls her hysterectomy and recovery: "It was the best experience I ever had — phenomenal. Dr. Luthringer is an awesome doctor."

Stephanie says her da Vinci Surgical System hysterectomy required only five small incisions. "Dr. Luthringer promised that the da Vinci would cut my healing time in half — it was less! I was back to work as a nurse in five days, minus the pain or pain meds.

I was up and walking around the evening of my surgery."

Other benefits of the da Vinci Surgical System include less pain and less blood loss. Typically, Dr. Luthringer calls patients soon after they return home to see how they're feeling. It's common for them to report little to no pain, and most who opt for medication use over-the-counter analgesics such as Tylenol to ease discomfort.

Another of Dr. Luthringer's patients offered a glowing testimonial. Andrea\*, age 33, tells the story of her hysterectomy: "Because of Dr. Luthringer, I feel so much better after years of pain. He spoke to me as a friend, but maintained thoroughness, caring and outstanding medical care. The da Vinci is awesome. I entered the hospital on the morning of the procedure with pain, woke up from my surgery, went home that night and never felt it again."

According to Dr. Luthringer, the benefits of the da Vinci Surgical System robot extend beyond shorter hospital stays and faster recovery. He and most of his patients report less risk of infection, no transfusions and less scarring.

"I was very fortunate," states Allison\*, age 44, as she compares modern technology with traditional procedures. "My mother had [a] hysterectomy at 41, the old-fashioned way. From my standpoint, the da Vinci allowed me to address my medical situation with the least impact on my personal and professional life. Being very physically active, I was concerned about maintaining my level of health during recovery. I was fully functional in one week! In a week-and-a-half, I was completely back to normal."

Thanks to the da Vinci Surgical System, her four-hour extensive myomectomy was a great success, yet Allison also appreciates the human touch. "Dr. Luthringer's persistence and willingness to put me first saved my quality of life."

## **COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL RAISED THE BAR**

Approximately 8% of hospitals in the United States have a da Vinci Surgical System robot, partially because of financial considerations and partially because decision makers may be slow to adopt the process.

Community General Hospital is the first hospital in Central and Northern New York to offer the da Vinci S Surgical System, which is the newest, most advanced surgical platform in the world. Looking toward the future, Dr. Luthringer predicts "a huge pendulum swing coming toward robotic assistants. It's totally driven by how well the patients do."

Dr. Luthringer's main message to his colleagues is simple: Consider the da Vinci Surgical System and work with a dedicated, well-trained team to do what's best for as many patients as possible.

The hope that other physicians will take his advice keeps him smiling all the way back from the operating suite, too. ■

\* To maintain privacy, patients' names have been omitted.