

Local hospital goes high-tech

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Rosebank: The Rosebank hospital's Netcare Centre for Sports Medicine and Orthopaedics launched its digital operating rooms and computer assisted surgery, the first hospital in the country to use the groundbreaking technology.

Computer Assisted Surgery (Cas), through BrainLAB, creates a navigation platform of image-guided surgery, taking the surgeon step by step through the use of fibre-optic lenses and digital cameras during orthopaedic procedures.

The price tag for the technology comes to over R2-million, but results in accurate surgery and quicker post-operative recovery. Orthopaedic surgeon Dr Glen Vardi said, "Conventional surgery relies on eyeballing but Cas assists the surgeon by giving accuracy to the exact millimetre and degree. With the technology, a knee damaged from arthritis hopefully will lead to a longer lasting result with this technology. "Cas works like GPS; if your bone is like the road and the

surgeon is the driver, Cas takes you to your destination efficiently."

Steve Golubchik, national technical manager for orthomedics, said, "It gives a surgeon more information to enable better clinical judgement." According to him, the system can also store the digital version of the procedure onto disc, from where the surgery can be later reviewed and used to educate new doctors. The Cas system allows the surgeon to precisely align the artificial joint with the bone which, ultimately, results in improved alignment of prostheses, faster patient recovery periods and, hopefully, longer-lasting results," said Dr Colin Barlin, orthopaedic surgeon at the Netcare Rosebank hospital.

Trevor Edley, director of Endoscopy Smith and Nephew, said, "Surgery is an artform and the technology assists with effective treatment of the patient. It's less invasive, more efficient and longer-lasting. I definitely think it's the way surgery is going to go." Johannesburg hospital is currently performing tests and demonstrations using Cas.



Dr Colin Barlin and Dr Glen Vardi demonstrate a knee replacement using computer assisted surgery.

Although the technology is not yet available to most South Africans, there are hopes that it will be one day. Soccer star Lucas Radebe made a guest appearance and lightheartedly spoke about his experience as a South African footballer and Leeds United FC captain. After sustaining a serious knee injury, he received surgery from the centre. He said, "The surgery gave me the tenth year of

my soccer career. We have great talent in this country and the World Cup cannot have come at a better time. It's going to be an African World Cup and international players will have an opportunity to have the best treatment in the new operating room. The kids at the hospital are an inspiration to me and I hope that we can make this country proud."