

NEWS

Kurinji Kannan first female Townsville doctor to perform robotic surgery

She's made a habit of being a trailblazer, but this local health professional may have just conquered her biggest frontier yet.

SAM FLANAGAN, Townsville Bulletin

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She's made a habit of being a trailblazer, but this local health professional may have just conquered her biggest frontier yet.

Kurinji Kannan has become the first female doctor to perform robotic surgery in Townsville using the Da Vinci XI robot.

Dr Kannan performed two major gynaecology surgeries at the Mater Hospital over the Anzac Day long weekend.

Dr Kannan first played with robotic equipment in the U.S. in 2010, though had never used it in a real-life situation until a couple of weeks ago.



Dr Kurinji Kannan. Picture: Alix Sweeney

She completed a training program in Sydney recently to be qualified to use the technology.

“It took almost 10 years for us to get it here in Townsville, so it was very exciting,” Dr Kannan said.

“Normal surgery is two-dimensional, the robotic surgery is three-dimensional. You have control of the camera and all the instruments you use.

“With the robot you have seven different axis’ of rotation. The precision of where you want to cut the hole makes it so much easier.

“There was a little bit of nervousness before I started, but I’ve been trained very well. Once you sit and start the procedure you forget your nervousness and get on with the job.”

Dr Kannan said both of her patients were discharged in less than 36 hours and required “dramatically less pain relief” than they would have for traditional surgery.



Dr Kurinji Kannan. Picture: Alix Sweeney

She also said blood loss was significantly lower during the operation because of the robot’s accuracy.

In 2005 Dr Kannan became the first Indian woman to complete fellowship training in obstetrics and gynaecology in New Zealand.

After relocating to Townsville, the pioneer then became the first Indian woman to become a urogynaecologist.

She hopes fellow female doctors follow her lead.

“I really think women surgeons are a bit reluctant to do robotic surgery and I don’t want it to become male dominated,” she said.

“I want to see women try it out and get trained.”

