



Larry McCowin, Dr. Domenico Savatta  
and Mrs. Sheila McCowin

## Singing the Praises of Robotics

Gospel singer Larry McCowin back on the road  
two weeks after Prostate Surgery. BY JEAN NASH WELLS

In his 42 years as a gospel singer, Larry McCowin has shared the stage with some of the legends of the genre—the Mighty Clouds of Joy, Evangelist Shirley Caesar and Slim and the Supreme Angels, to name a few. He still travels the country with Lil' Willie and the Keynotes (formerly known as the Gospel Keynotes), a popular gospel group whose music has earned a Grammy, three Stellar Awards, a Dove Award and many other accolades.

At age 59, McCowin, a proud grandfather of 13, has much to be thankful for, not the least of which is his recent robotic-assisted prostatectomy. This past September, McCowin took a leap of faith and decided to undergo the robotic-assisted surgery at Newark Beth

Israel Medical Center to treat his prostate cancer. Known as the da Vinci Prostatectomy the procedure, which dramatically reduces the patient's pain, scarring, blood loss and recovery, has been in use at Newark Beth Israel for approximately two years and is fast becoming an alternative to the traditional open operation for prostate cancer.

Several comparisons show why the da Vinci Prostatectomy is preferable to open surgery for many patients. Several small incisions about the size of a dime, replace the eight inch incision required in the open surgery method and patients' hospital stays are reduced from two to four days with four to six weeks recovery time at home, to an overnight stay and a shorter recovery time of one to two weeks. Blood loss during the procedure is



**If you have a family history of prostate cancer, or if you are an African American male, the ACS recommends that you are screened earlier, beginning at age 45.**

so minimal that patients are not asked to donate their own blood pre-operatively and men who undergo the robotic procedure return home the following morning without narcotic pain medication.

"Actually, Mr. McCowin was not an ideal candidate to have the robotic procedure," said his urologist Domenico Savatta, MD, of Florham Park, NJ who performed the operation. "His weight and prior bladder surgery made the procedure very complex. At 280 pounds, he is one of the heaviest patients ever at Newark Beth Israel to have the procedure. His prior bladder surgery made the prostate very difficult to find, and some surgeons would have found the case too risky.

"With each case we have done, we have learned how to modify our approach for obese patients and gained experience in handling a number of complex robotic prostatectomies. We believed that the procedure could work for Mr. McCowin and it did." McCowin's operation took approximately four hours with no complications.

"I saw my wife Sheila, right after the surgery. At that very moment, I felt fine. I knew that I was going to be okay," said McCowin. "A day after the operation, I was able to go home. After the catheter was removed, I was back on the road with the group."

Prior to the surgery, McCowin like many other prostate patients, did not have any symptoms. He had been screened for prostate cancer in the past and was told that he should have a biopsy. McCowin admits that he waited almost a year after he was diagnosed, considering treatment options before he decided to have the surgery.

"My brother had the open surgery and he was in a lot of pain afterwards," he said. "Being an entertainer, I didn't want to be down too long and I was concerned about nerve damage." After conversations with some of Dr. Savatta's patients who had the procedure, McCowin was further convinced that he should go ahead with the surgery. "I'm glad that I had it," he added. "Now a lot of people are approaching me to find out what they need to do in order to have robotic surgery. I am more than willing to point them in the right direction, especially if it can save someone's life."

McCowin shows no signs of slowing down. Lil' Willie and the Keynotes are now on their way to Michigan and Ohio.

Newark Beth Israel Medical Center is a 671-bed regional referral teaching hospital with specialized programs, among them heart and kidney transplantation, cardiac surgery, oncology, and maternal/child health services. With more than 30 pediatric specialties, Children's Hospital of New Jersey cares for children from birth through adolescence. For more information call 1-800-THE BETH or visit their website at: [www.TheBethRobot.com](http://www.TheBethRobot.com).



University of Kentucky

**... the da Vinci Prostatectomy is fast becoming an alternative to the traditional open operation for prostate cancer.**

*Editor's Note: According to the American Cancer Society, prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in men, affecting one out of every 6 American males and killing more than 30,000 men each year. The good news is that prostate cancer is being found earlier. However, African American men still have a higher incidence of prostate cancer than white males. Recent data also indicates that obese patients have been found to have a higher incidence and more aggressive prostate cancer risk.*

*If you are 50 years or older, there are two types of screenings you should have annually, the PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood test, and the digital rectum examination. If you have a family history of prostate cancer, or if you are an African American male, the ACS recommends that you are screened earlier, beginning at age 45. ■*