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TransEnterix beefs up SPIDER with stronger new generation

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Often the secret to a company's success, especially in this industry, is knowing how to listen to its customers and incorporate feedback as quickly as possible. **TransEnterix** (Research Triangle Park, North Carolina) President/CEO Todd Pope could probably teach a workshop on just such a topic. In less than a year of launching its first generation SPIDER (single port instrument delivery extended reach) surgical system, the company is already launching its second generation of the SPIDER, and the instruments that accompany it, based on user feedback from the first.

"Our system is flexible so that allows it to go through a very small opening and then it opens up inside the abdomen," Pope told *Medical Device Daily*. He said that the flexibility gives surgeons "true-left and true-right movement" and "great angles" but sometimes it didn't give them as much strength as they were used to with traditional surgical tools. So, taking that feedback into consideration, the company updated the flexible arms, making it three times stronger than the original product.

Pope said the company is in the middle of a limited launch of the new generation SPIDER and plans a full launch this summer in the U.S. and Europe. **TransEnterix** launched the first generation SPIDER surgical system in April 2010 (*Medical Device Daily*, April 12, 2010).

"Our goal is really to bring these game-changing technologies to minimally invasive surgery and do it at a rapid pace," Pope said. "We're pleased that in less than a year since our first generation we are launching a second generation of all our products."

In addition to the increased strength for dissecting and retracting tissue, **TransEnterix** says the new SPIDER system delivers added precision through new added precision through new endomechanical arms that move and control instruments, improved ergonomics through a modified surgeon interface, and optimized reach for a wide range of patient types and operative tasks. The ability to vary reach within the abdomen is particularly important in minimally invasive surgeries to treat obesity, like gastric banding and sleeve gastrectomy, the company noted.

Like its predecessor, the new SPIDER system provides intra-abdominal triangulation via a single site, true-left and true-right hand instrumentation, and 360-degree motion with flexible instruments. The low-profile diameter remains set at 18 millimeters - the size of a dime.

"One thing all surgeons have in common is their drive to constantly seek out new and better ways to successfully treat patients while minimizing the invasiveness of surgery," said Luke Roush, the company's VP of global marketing. "The new SPIDER surgical system works to maintain the principals of gold-standard laparoscopic surgery - such as intra-abdominal triangulation - in a way that is less invasive for patients and more effective for surgeons."

The SPIDER system is designed to address problems that surgeons frequently encounter when using other, less-sophisticated single-incision systems by opening up and expanding within the patient's abdomen, like an umbrella.

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According to the company, this allows surgeons to readily triangulate instruments and safely accomplish many tasks from one small incision.

"Providing truly flexible yet strong instrumentation in laparoscopy is a meaningful advance with potential to merge the tools and unlimited angles of flexible endoscopy with the technique and surgical work needs of laparoscopy," said Juan-Carlos Verdeja, MD, who practices at **South Miami Hospital** (Florida).

Pope said the company is "excited about the early feedback" it has received from surgeons who have already used the second generation SPIDER system.

In less than three years, **TransEnterix** has evolved from a startup enterprise into a company that has raised more than \$60 million in venture capital funding and commercialized operations in the U.S. and Europe. The company says it partners with medical thought-leaders to rapidly develop pioneering technologies that advance minimally invasive surgery.

In October 2009, **TransEnterix** secured \$55 million in a second round of institutional financing, paving the way for the company to manufacture and market the SPIDER surgical platform. That Series B round brought the company's total venture raised to \$76 million (*MDD*, Oct. 8, 2009).

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