The Evolution of Lung Cancer Surgery

As Video-Assisted Thoracic Surgery (VATS) is considered less invasive than open surgery (or open thoracotomy), this technique offers a number of advantages. Following surgery, the patient will experience less pain and a better immune system response, have a greater potential for normal breathing function, and enjoy a better quality of life.

**VATS**

VATS allows surgeons to perform numerous procedures for lung cancer surgery using only two to four small incisions. Each of these incisions is less than an inch. Using specialized equipment, the surgeon is able to perform procedures like wedge resections and lobectomies without making a large incision or spreading the rib cage.

**Open Procedure**

Utilizing this approach, a surgeon removes all or part of a lung through a large incision on one side of the chest (thorax). To reach the lung, instruments called retractors are applied to open the chest cavity at the site of the incision and spread the ribs (surrounding the lungs) wider apart to allow optimal access to the problem site.

**VATS Lobectomy**

One typical procedure performed using the VATS technique is an upper right lobectomy. A videoscope allows the surgeon to view, under high magnification, the cancerous lung tissue and manipulate the instruments to effectively remove the tissue from the body.

**Open Lobectomy**

Because open procedures require a large incision and the disruption of major structures (muscles, ribs) in order to gain access to view and treat the lungs, a thoracotomy is considered a more invasive approach.