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Nerve-sparing Axillary Dissection Using the da Vinci Surgical System

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Abstract This is an initial report of a new method of axillary dissection via a periareolar incision and an 8 mm incision in the axilla with the da Vinci Surgical System. The 10x magnification and three-dimensional image, together with the versatility and precision of the robotic telemanipulators, has enabled us to perform nerve-sparing axillary dissection in four patients with invasive ductal carcinoma of the breast undergoing segmental (conservative) excision and level II axillary dissection. The time for the robotic axillary dissection ranged from 30 to 105 minutes (average 70.5 minutes). The average number of lymph nodes retrieved was 13 (11, 11, 13, and 17, respectively). Postoperatively all four patients recovered well and were discharged the next day. The robotic system can enhance the surgeon's ability by providing a high-definition, magnified, three-dimensional view of the operative field, intuitively controlled articulating instruments, and elimination of tremors; and it has potential benefits for the patient.

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