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# Bobby Bhasker-Rao, M.D., F.A.C.S., F.A.S.M.B.S.

## CUTTING-EDGE ROBOTIC WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY

By June Allan Corrigan

### MANY ACCOLADES HAVE BEEN BESTOWED

upon Dr. Bobby Bhasker-Rao during the 11 years he's practiced in Palm Springs. The awards acknowledge his cutting-edge work in the field of robotic weight loss surgery and his unsurpassed level of care. Indeed, Dr. Bobby, as his patients like to call him, has performed more than 3,000 of these procedures and turned many people's lives around in the process. Still, he's humble when speaking about his contributions. He's more likely to point to the fine team he's assembled that helps his practice achieve the outcomes that it does.

"Honestly, surgery is just the starting point for these patients as they embark upon their weight loss journey," Dr. Bobby says. "It's really what they do afterward and how closely they follow our program that determines their level of success." He counts on the expertise of registered dietitian Courtney Markey, M.S., R.D., who customizes complete nutrition, exercise, and behavioral modification plans for them to follow post-procedure. "Every time they come in for a follow-up visit with Dr. Bobby, they see me as well," says Markey. "I'm available for phone calls if they have questions or if they need to come in on a day when Dr. Bobby isn't here and just talk to me. The extra motivation helps."

Studies show that patients who participate in a comprehensive program — like the one offered by the Lite Life Surgery team — are 40 percent more successful at keeping the weight off. "Without follow-up, it's so easy to fall off track and end up regaining some weight or failing to lose as much as they should," says Dr. Bobby. "Courtney is really the backbone to our success after surgery — guiding patients, motivating, educating them on what they should and should not eat, and the supplements they need to take. Her role is critical."

It's a team effort, but there's no doubt Dr. Bobby is the leader. Utilizing the da Vinci robotic surgical system, this gifted specialist performs gastric bypasses, as well as sleeve gastrectomies, Lap-Band surgeries, and revisional procedures. Dr. Bobby belongs to a small cadre of surgeons — only about 50 or so nationwide — who perform weight loss procedures robotically. He holds the distinction of being the highest-volume and most experienced robotic surgeon



"Dr. Bobby" Bhasker-Rao

PATRICE NELSON

on the West Coast. The 3-D imagery the robot provides plus the 360-degree wrist rotation it allows quickly convinced him that robotic surgery ensures the best outcomes. "With the robot, I can operate more precisely, resulting in fewer complications and faster recovery," he says. More often than not, his patients return home within 24 hours of their procedure.

### SUCCESS STORIES

Indio resident Michelle was one of those patients. Within 24 hours of her sleeve gastrectomy in July 2014, this 34-year-old mother was back home with her preschooler. "Dr. Bobby is such a gentle physician and so incredibly knowledgeable," she said. "The staff was kind and they worked so hard to get my insurance approval. My experience

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*“With the robot, I can operate more precisely,  
resulting in fewer complications and faster recovery”*

could not have been any better, from the moment I started the process up until even now when I go in for checkups.” Standing only 5 feet tall, Michelle’s 209 pounds weighed heavily on her so she’s thrilled to have arrived at her goal weight of 125 pounds. “To tell the truth, it’s the best thing I’ve ever done in my life other than have a kid,” she concluded.

The experience has been much the same for Joe Serna, a sign installer in Palm Desert. He’d grown frustrated in his efforts to lose weight. “I tried different diets — I’d lose 30, 40 pounds, but then a month later, I’d start gaining. I’d gain it back double,” he said. At 480 pounds, the 30-year-old knew he had to do something, so he attended one of Dr. Bobby’s seminars and was impressed by the program’s comprehensiveness. Serna underwent a gastric bypass in January 2015 and has lost 150 pounds so far. “It’s the best decision I ever made in my life,” he says.

These patients’ sentiments reflect the fact that Dr. Bobby has again been named “Top Surgeon in the Nation” — as noted in *The New York Times* — for the third year in a row. He’s received the Best of Palm Springs Physician award and graced the list of Top Doctors revealed in an independent survey of the Greater Palm Springs area. In recent years, the Patient Choice and America’s Most Compassionate Doctor Awards have come his way. He’s been nationally recognized as Best of the Best among Bariatric Surgeons.

#### WHAT LIES AHEAD

Technology continues to advance in the bariatric surgery field, and Dr. Bobby remains at the forefront. He’s already performed one modified duodenal switch procedure this year, which is the latest method of weight loss surgery. It’s an extremely effective alternative to the gastric bypass procedure for the right patient. Dr. Bobby also had the opportunity to evaluate an up-and-coming robot capable of accomplishing



From left are Natalie Lopez, medical assistant; Erica Gallegos, medical assistant; Courtney Markey, registered dietitian nutritionist; and Janis Limon, medical assistant.

procedures through one small incision. His skill and willingness to try out new procedures and equipment explains why Dr. Bobby is in great demand to proctor and train surgeons around the U.S.

The advantages of weight loss surgery extend far beyond the obvious. It can dramatically improve a person’s appearance and elevate their self-esteem but the health benefits an individual gains can’t be underestimated. There are approximately 30 co-morbidities associated with obesity, including Type 2 diabetes and hypertension. Many of these health concerns are

resolved virtually overnight. There’s no better gift to give oneself that the gift of good health.

Patients from near and far seek out Dr. Bobby and his team at Life Life Surgery. Their reputation precedes them — a zero mortality rate, the promise of stellar outcomes, and the assurance of more precise technology. While the facts and figures speak for themselves, it’s really the level of care and comprehensive nature of their program that sets the practice apart. “No matter what type of weight loss surgery you undergo, you need to have support,” says Dr. Bobby. “And that’s what we offer here.”

*Voted Top Doctor in  
Palm Springs Life magazine  
three years in a row.*



2013



2014



2015