

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

Robotic weight loss surgery leader

BY JUNE ALLAN CORRIGAN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICE NELSON



"Dr. Bobby" Bhasker-Rao

■ Dr. Bobby Bhasker-Rao has never been one to rest on his laurels despite the numerous accolades bestowed on him. Renowned in the field of weight loss surgery, he continues to champion new technological advancements designed to improve patient care and outcomes. Utilizing the da Vinci robotic surgical system, this gifted specialist performs gastric bypasses, sleeve gastrectomies, Lap-Band procedures, and complex revisional procedures. His surgical skills and keen eye for emerging innovations are complemented by superior follow-up care provided by the expert team he's assembled at his Lite Life Surgery practice in Rancho Mirage. The combination of these elements practically assures a patient's success.

Currently marking his 12th year of practice in the desert, Dr. Bobby — as his patients prefer to call him — has never been known to back down from a challenge. Perhaps that's why patients from near and far come to him to correct surgeries they have had performed elsewhere. Janet Casas of Fullerton is one of them. The 59-year-old retired police dispatcher underwent a rather invasive stomach stapling procedure known as a vertical banded gastroplasty close to 30 years ago with disappointing results. She struggled for years from complications and never came close to her weight loss goals.

A series of referrals led Casas to Dr. Bobby in 2015, and from that moment the narrative of her story changed. Despite encountering intimidating amounts of scar tissue, Dr. Bobby tackled the problem of Casas' failed initial procedure and performed a Robotic Gastric Bypass, which was a vast improvement over the surgery Casas had endured years earlier. More important, the revisionary procedure was a complete success. In the months following her surgery, Casas dropped the weight she previously never could, and the myriad of discomforts she'd grown accustomed to living with disappeared. She attributes her success to the hospital, Dr. Bobby, and his staff. "I could not have asked for a better experience," Casas says. "I'm smaller now than when I got married!"

## Popular and Effective Procedures

Sleeve gastrectomies and gastric bypasses are the practice's two most requested surgeries with good reason. Patients who follow the

program can conceivably lose about 70 percent of their excess weight. Naturally, this causes a dramatic improvement in their appearance — not to mention their self-esteem — but perhaps even more important, it can resolve several of the comorbidities associated with obesity. Conditions like Type 2 diabetes and hypertension are often resolved virtually overnight.

"The sleeve gastrectomy, in particular, is a versatile operation, as it can always be converted to either a gastric bypass or a duodenal switch in the future if a patient isn't meeting with much success," Dr. Bobby says. His dedication to achieving optimum results for a patient knows no bounds. "Sleeving can serve either as the primary operation or become part of a two-step procedure, meaning the sleeve is the first step and a gastric bypass might be the second step once they've lost some weight," he adds.

A Lap-Band proved to be an appropriate weight loss solution for Danielle Munoz, a 26-year-old bartender from Coachella. In 2013, Munoz weighed 220 pounds and was generally unhappy about her appearance. Now she weighs 155 pounds and reports that life has never been better. "Once I lost most of the weight, Dr. Bobby went in and changed out my Lap-Band for a smaller one," Munoz says. "If I ever feel like I'm gaining weight, I just consult all the books they gave me and get back on track that way."

Every patient's situation is unique, but all can count on Dr. Bobby's tenacity. "We don't stop with one procedure," he says. "If we have to, we'll provide revisional procedures to enhance quality of life. The highly sophisticated instrumentation robotics affords us means we can do complex revisional procedures with precision in the safest manner possible. The 3-D imagery and the 360-degree wrist rotation translate into better visualization, cleaner dissection, and

Bobby Bhasker-Rao, MD, FACS, Courtney Markey, MS, RD, Mariah Matteson, MA, Erica Gallegos, MA, Natalie Lopez, MA.



significantly less tissue manipulation. This leads to superior outcomes defined by less post-operative nausea, less pain, and faster recovery. Patients are able to return home and resume their normal activities sooner than traditional surgeries would typically allow."

## Cornerstones of Success

Since follow-up is so crucial to a patient's success, Dr. Bobby relies on the expertise of on-staff dietitian Courtney Markey, M.S., R.D. She customizes complete nutritional, exercise, and behavioral modification plans for each patient (both pre- and post-procedure) and schedules regular consultations. "I've noticed, especially with patients who have undergone a revision, [that] they come back saying it's so much easier," Markey says. Their quick recoveries are a testament to the advantages of laparoscopic robotic surgery. Then there's the revision itself, correcting whatever problem existed and/or paving the way for further improvement. "They'll say 'Oh, I can eat and it doesn't hurt anymore,'" she says. "It's really wonderful."

Dr. Bobby has again been recognized by *The New York Times* as one of the "Top Surgeons in the Nation" for the fourth

year in a row. He has received the Best of Palm Springs Physician award and graced the list of Top Doctors chosen 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.

If a patient has been fortunate enough to have his or her original primary procedure performed by Dr. Bobby, he or she is well on their way to achieving his or her goals. In contrast, most of the patients who seek out Dr. Bobby for revisions to surgeries performed elsewhere have never experienced the level of support they receive through his practice. "These procedures are all tools," Dr. Bobby concludes. "A patient's success level depends on what they do with that tool." Rest assured that at Lite Life Surgery, the patient never has to do it alone.

## TOP DOCTOR

DR. BOBBY VOTED  
TOP DOCTOR  
4 YEARS IN A ROW



2013

2014



2015

2016

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