



## **Pioneering New Surgical Procedure Performed at Alvarado in February**

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(Mission Times Courier, San Diego, CA) A pioneering new surgical procedure was performed at Alvarado Hospital in February. Julie Ellner, MD, is the first surgeon in San Diego to perform StomaphyX, an incision-free alternative to conventional surgery for gastric bypass patients who have regained weight.

On Valentine's Day, bariatric surgeon Julie Ellner, MD, performed the 30-minute procedure, using a simple scope inserted through the patient's mouth to re-shrink the stomach pouch. There were no incisions, and the patient went home the same day.

StomaphyX only became available in the last few months. Dr. Ellner said the buzz about this procedure has quickly spread among gastric bypass patients via Internet message boards.

Dr. Ellner has been doing laparoscopic gastric bypass surgery since 2000, when she became the first woman in the world to perform the procedure. She says incision-free surgery, also referred to as "natural orifice surgery," is a promising development in surgical technique.

"The conventional revisional surgery for gastric bypass surgery starts with a long incision and takes hours because of all of the existing scar tissue," Dr. Ellner said. "The risks for bleeding, complications and mortality are much higher than for the original gastric bypass surgery. "And even if the revisional surgery goes well, patients just don't do as well the second time around."

Because of the risks, Dr. Ellner added that many surgeons will not perform conventional revisional surgery for gastric bypass.

In contrast, StomaphyX uses an endoscope inserted through the mouth in order to tighten the small pouch created at the top of the stomach during the first gastric bypass surgery. The results are immediate. The patients feel just like they did after the initial gastric bypass surgery.

Dr. Ellner emphasized that StomaphyX offers gastric bypass patients a second chance, but they must also make behavioral changes in order to receive the full weight-loss benefit. "StomaphyX is a tool, like gastric bypass surgery is a tool," Dr. Ellner said. Patients who do not use it appropriately and follow the rest of the program can regain the weight again."

Alvarado Hospital is a 306-bed acute care hospital that also operates the San Diego Rehabilitation Institute, which serves patients with either inpatient or outpatient rehabilitation needs. Alvarado has more than 500 on-staff physicians, 1,000 employees and 400 volunteers who provide quality care to East County San Diego. Alvarado Hospital's programs include cardiac services, emergency medicine services, neuroscience, orthopedics, oncology, rehabilitation, general surgical services, sexual medicine, skull base surgery, sleep center, vascular services and surgical weight reduction.