

Cypriot is pioneer of high-tech laser surgery

A TEAM of surgeons led by a Cypriot have pioneered a less painful and less costly method for gallbladder surgery at a hospital in Milwaukee in the U.S.

The team is under the direction of Constantine Frantzides, who is a professor of surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin and a pioneer in the surgical use of lasers.

Dr Frantzides said: "The new procedure is called laparoscopic laser cholecystectomy and it is both safe and effective."

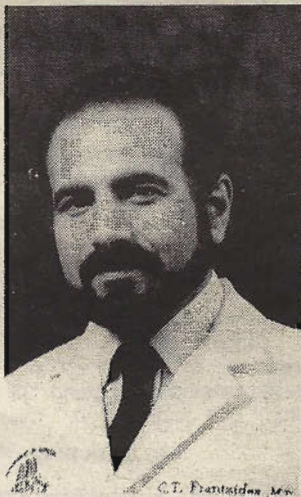
The work is being done at the Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital in Milwaukee.

Advantage

According to Frantzides, the laparoscopic procedure requires only three tiny punctures below the chest, where instruments are introduced, and a very small incision near the navel, where a thin scope is inserted to view the surgical field, and through which the compressed gallbladder is ultimately removed.

Throughout the operation, the surgeon views the procedure on two video screens projected from a scope inserted through the navel incision.

Frantzides uses a laser to release the diseased gallblad-



PIONEER: Frantzides

der, and then, the gallbladder is removed through the navel-area incision.

"Patients undergoing the procedure can expect a shorter hospital stay, a faster recovery period and the advantage of virtually no scarring," he said.

Twenty million Americans suffer from gallbladder disease and surgical removal of the gallbladder is performed over half a million times a year in the U.S. making the potential impact of this technique immense.

The new surgery is the latest of several recent developments to simplify treatment of gallbladder disease. Some physicians are also using new, non-surgical techniques to dissolve or crush gallstones. These, however, leave the diseased gallbladder in place, making the recurrence of gallstones highly probable.

Discharged

"When I first heard about the technique in 1988, I thought it was something to be developed here at the Medical College of Wisconsin, since we are a teaching institution," Frantzides said. "As we work with the technique, I plan to explore its effectiveness even further."

Because of the minimal operative trauma of this new technique, patients are virtually free of postoperative pain and usually can be discharged from the hospital a few hours after the procedure is completed. Most patients are able to resume their normal activities within one week of the operation.

In contrast, traditional gallbladder surgery normally involves a six to eight inch incision, a four-day hospital stay, and four-to six-week recovery period.