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## **First World Symposium on Endometriosis Exceeds Expectations**

More than 400 physicians, researchers, scientists, engineers, physicists and others, representing 39 states and 41 countries, attended the first-ever World Symposium on Endometriosis, March 24-26, 2011, at the Intercontinental Hotel in Atlanta. Sponsored by Northside Hospital, the event featured late-breaking science, presented by some of the world's leading experts on endometriosis; open forum discussions to further explore treatment and diagnosis options in the management of this disease; live surgery transmissions from hospitals around the world; hands-on training to educate attendees in the art and science of laparoscopic suturing and knot tying; and much more.

"This gathering explored historical, diagnostic and therapeutic possibilities and treatment of endometriosis," said Dr. Ceana Nezhat, chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Northside Hospital and chair of the 2011 World Symposium. "As the title "From Molecules to Robotics" reflects, therapeutic options from immunology to the use of robots in treatment of this enigmatic disease were discussed."

Endometriosis is one of the most misunderstood afflictions in women's health, affecting more than 70 million women of child-bearing age, including young girls, worldwide. While the lifetime incidence of developing breast cancer in the U.S. is one in eight women and one in 72 for ovarian cancer, it is estimated that one in seven women will develop endometriosis. Annual costs of the disease reached \$22 billion in the U.S. in 2002<sup>1</sup>. Symptoms can include pain, irregular bleeding and infertility, among others. In fact, incidence of endometriosis has been found in approximately 30 to 40 percent of infertility cases. If left untreated, it can progress and cause severe medical problems including organ damage and eventual loss of function.<sup>2</sup>

"I have treated endometriosis in women of all ages, as young as 12 years old," said Dr. Nezhat. "This symposium was the first gathering of its caliber and I believe it will set the foundation for future meetings and collaborative work."

"As the leader in women's services, Northside Hospital is proud to be affiliated with this event," said Vicki Barnett, director of surgical services at Northside Hospital, which treats more cases of endometriosis by operative laparoscopy and robotics than any other hospital in Georgia and is ranked in the top 5 percent of U.S. hospitals for GYN robotic procedures. "We are making considerable

advances in our gynecologic surgery program and look forward to helping continue further discussion and research surrounding endometriosis.”

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<sup>1</sup> Simsa P, Mihalyi A, Kyama CM, Mwenda JM, Fülöp V, D'Hooghe TM. “Future of endometriosis research.” *Womens Health (Lond Engl)*. 3.5 (2007 Sep): 647-54.

<sup>2</sup> Kho K, Nezhat C, Zurawin J. “Adolescent Endometriosis: the Journey to Diagnosis.” *The Journal of Minimally Invasive Gynecology*. 17.6 (2010 Nov, Supplement): S28. This abstract won the Society of Reproductive Surgeons’ Research Award at the American Society for Reproductive Medicine 65th Annual Meeting. It highlights the need for early diagnosis and treatment.