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Surgeon-engineer team produce training software for robot-assisted surgery

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Two Buffalo scientists have paired up to create technology that has the potential to revolutionize surgical training worldwide, developing the first procedure-based, hands-on surgical training software. Their patent-pending system, Hands-On Surgical Training (HOST), guides surgeons through real-time operative procedures using the Robotic Surgical Simulator (RoSS) interface.

Khurshid Guru, MD, a staff physician in Urology at Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI), and Thenkurussi "Kesh" Kesavadas, PhD, director of the

Virtual Reality Laboratory and a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at the University at Buffalo (UB), created RoSS as a way to help surgeons hone their skills in robot-assisted surgery so that they've logged hours of training before they perform a particular surgical procedure. The HOST software system takes this concept further, immersing the surgeon in a surgical environment using automation technology and an interactive checklist-based process.

"It's as close to operating as you can get outside the operating room," says Dr. Guru, who is also director of RPCI's Center for Robotic Surgery. "HOST literally holds the surgeon's hands."

The HOST software system takes surgeons through surgical steps, prompting and guiding them through the critical stages of an operation before proceeding to the next step. A metrics tool evaluates user performance so that surgeons can track their progress. That step-by-step prompting system is unique in the field of computer-assisted surgical learning tools, as is HOST's basis in observational learning. It's an extremely effective system for training surgeons on emerging robot-assisted surgical techniques, says Dr. Guru.

"Even though it uses these new computer-aided tools, our system is rooted in mentored, hands-on surgical training, just like the traditional training model," he says. "They both come back to responding to cues and the opportunity to observe master sur

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