

Mako, the smart electro-mechanical machine and the first of its kind on the African continent, will be responsible for replacing your knee and hip joints.

Picture: Stryker Corporation



The operating theatre where surgery take place. Mako the robot will soon be operating in hospital conditions similar to this one in Joburg and two other provinces as from next month.

PICTURE: PABALLO THEKISO

# Robotic hip, knee-replacement surgery

His name is Mako, he's friendlier than the Terminator and he's spot on when he operates on you

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**T**HERE'S a new robot in town and his name is Mako. The smart electro-mechanical machine is the first of its kind on the African continent and will be responsible for replacing your knee and hip joints.

But don't expect a human-

looking robot on wheels.

Think of the Terminator's arm – just less frightening.

Stryker's Mako Robotic-Arm assisted technology is commonly used in the United States, Europe and Australia for total hip and partial knee replacements.

The Mako Robot arrived in Joburg recently and will be introduced to the public next month at the new Busamed

Private Hospital, Orthopaedic and Oncology Centre in Modderfontein.

Orthopaedic surgeon and specialist in arthroplasty surgery Dr Lipalo Mokete says the robot couldn't have come at a better time.

"Gone are the days when people suffered from chronic pain after knee and hip-replacement surgery because their new artificial joint has

slightly moved or is not in the right place."

Speaking during the World Bone and Joint Week, which runs from October 12 – 20, Mokete said more and more people led stressful lifestyles and were prone to more diseases. He added people were now less accepting of compromised lifestyles.

"Thirty years ago, if you were young and had arthritis

we would have given you painkillers and told you to come back when you are in your sixties. But the truth is, anyone can now suffer from arthritis and bone inflammations. These are very painful to live with," he said.

Before a procedure, a CAT scan of the joints, knee and hips is taken. This information is inputted into specialised software that allows

the surgeon to pre-plan with accuracy the ideal placement of the implants. The surgeon then, with the assistance of Mako, can operate with high precision.

"With this technology, we cannot cut anywhere we are not supposed to because the robot won't allow us to. It targets the exact area, leaving very little room for error," he explained.

Mokete, who last year performed hip-replacement surgery on former *Idols* judge and actress Mara Louw, said unlike in the past, the operations are less invasive and last up to an hour.

"The robot doesn't make the operations quicker, but it targets the right spot."

He said while some people could be sceptical about technology, more and more med-

ical practitioners were gearing towards robot-assisted surgery, adding the Da Vinci surgical system was already in use by urologists.

"There was resistance in the beginning, but people have accepted it because this is where we are going. In the next 15 years these kinds of machines will be used in almost every hospital and medical centre," he said.