" Innovative Precision: A Comparative Analysis of the DaVinci Robot in Medicine and VEX Robotics Engineering Design"

Marcellus S. White

Team: 5769B

Newburg, Maryland, United States

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The DaVinci Surgical System, a cutting-edge robotic platform, has revolutionized the landscape of surgery by offering enhanced precision and minimally invasive procedures (*Apex*, n.d.). Concurrently, VEX Robotics competitions provide a unique learning environment for students, helping to develop skills in engineering design and problem-solving. This paper aims to draw parallels and distinctions between the application of robotics in medicine and education, illustrating the shared principles of engineering design and innovation, and the limitless potential this implies.

The DaVinci Surgical System, developed by Intuitive Surgical in 1999, is a robotic platform designed to assist surgeons in performing complex surgeries with unparalleled precision as compared to a human's capability (*Abex*, n.d.). Comprising robotic arms controlled by a console, and operated by a surgeon, translates the surgeon's movements into precise actions within the patient's body. (*See* Image 1) Its application's and continued evolution span various surgical specialties, from urology to gynecology and general surgery. One of the key benefits of the DaVinci System is its promotion of minimally invasive surgery. The robot's smaller incisions lead to reduced patient trauma, quicker recovery times, less monetary obligations due to shorter hospital stays, and less scarring compared to traditional open procedures (*Abex*, n.d.). Surgeons manipulate the robotic arms with increased dexterity, providing a 3D view and enhancing their ability to navigate intricate anatomical structures. (*See* Image 2) It is clear that this invention has undoubtedly revolutionized robotic surgery in the United States and in the rest of the world, thereby offering ever-increasing performance with the development of subsequent configurations (*Abex*, n.d.).

The integration of the DaVinci Surgical System follows a meticulous design process. It begins with a comprehensive understanding of the surgical task that is to be initiated, followed by the development of the robot's hardware and software. Repetitive testing and refinement are extremely crucial in ensuring the system meets the stringent standards of safety and efficiency required in the medical field (*Crazyblog*, 2017). Continuous advancements in robotic technology enhance the capabilities of the DaVinci System, allowing for increasingly new complex procedures. However, challenges such as cost, accessibility, and the need for specialized training continue to persist and plague developers of the robot. The ongoing refinement of the system exemplifies the iterative nature of the design process in a high-stakes medical setting (*Medical Device Engineering: An Overview*, 2022).

VEX Robotics provides students with a hands-on platform to engage in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education (Darmawansah et. al., 2023). VEX competitions challenge teams to design, build, and program robots to complete specific tasks. The experience offers valuable insights into the engineering design process, teamwork, and problem-solving. As such, VEX Robotics teams follow a design process akin to that of professionals in the engineering field. Each team starts by defining the problem, conducting research and asking questions, and generating ideas for their robot's design. Prototyping, testing, and iteration follow, refining the robot's functionality. This iterative process mimics the real-world engineering challenges faced by professionals (Sphero, 2021). (*See* Image 3) As a result, VEX Robotics competitions emphasize collaboration and problem-solving, mirroring the interdisciplinary nature of real-world engineering projects (Darmawansah et. al., 2023). Teams must work together to analyze challenges, brainstorm solutions, and implement effective strategies. These skills extend beyond robotics, preparing students for future endeavors in diverse career fields, one of which is the medical field. Similar to the iterative nature of the DaVinci System's design process, VEX Robotics teams learn the importance of failure in refining their designs. Each unsuccessful attempt that the teams expeirences becomes a stepping stone towards improvement, fostering resilience and a growth mindset among our fellow team members. This view and concept aligns with the philosophy that setbacks are integral to the learning process.

Despite the differing contexts of medicine and education, common threads emerge in the design processes of the DaVinci Surgical System and VEX Robotics. Both involve defining a problem, iterative testing, and refining solutions. The emphasis on collaboration, innovation, and learning from failure is intrinsic to the success of both endeavors (Sphero, 2021). The skills developed in VEX Robotics competitions have practical applications beyond the educational setting. As previously mentioned, teammates gain hands-on experience in problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork – skills highly valued in professions ranging from engineering to healthcare. The parallels highlight the universal nature of the engineering design process.

In conclusion, the application of robotics in the fields of medicine and education, exemplified by the DaVinci Surgical System and VEX Robotics competitions, showcases the transformative power of technology. Both domains leverage the engineering design process to push the boundaries of what is possible, whether it be enhancing surgical precision or fostering the next generation of innovators. After being involved in the field of VEX Robotics for the last 2 years, I now understand the shared principles and distinctions between these applications provides valuable insights for advancing technology in diverse fields.

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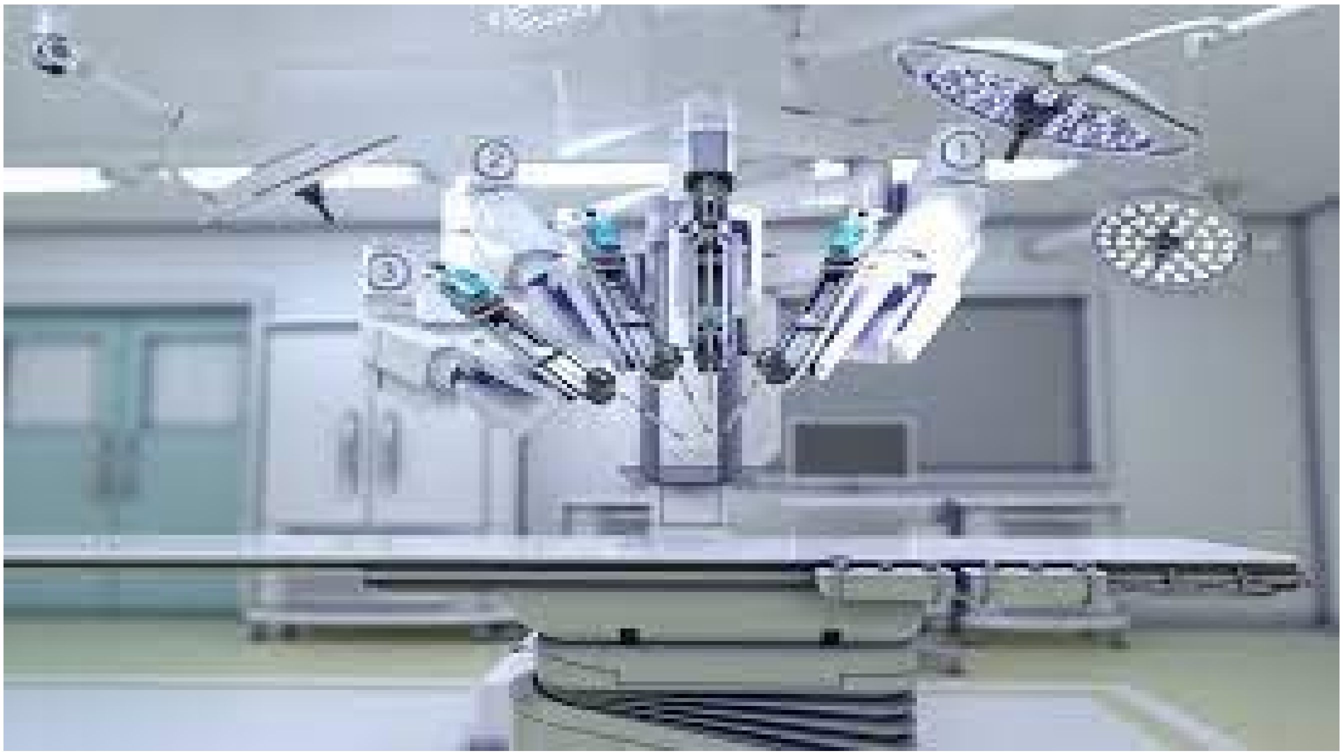

Image 1: DaVinci Robot and Operating Table

Image 2: Example of DaVinci Robot and Surgeons in Medical Procedure

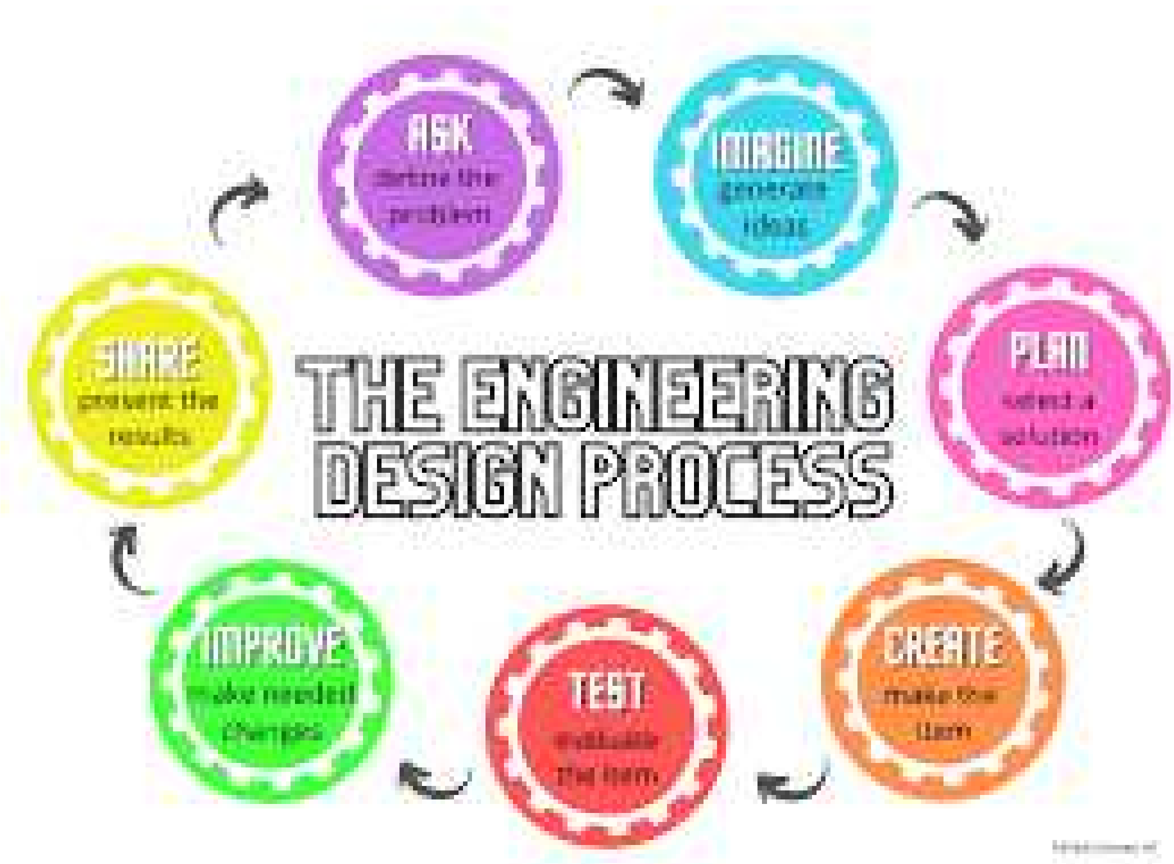

Image 3: The Engineering Design Process