



# The Cutting Edge

May 1, 2008

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The Cutting Edge Newsletter (May 1, 2008)

News for the OR Professional

Published by Surgical Information Systems

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### **Surgeons give hope to blind with successful 'bionic eye' operations**

Surgeons have carried out the first operations in Britain using a pioneering "bionic eye" that could in future help to restore blind people's sight. Two successful operations to implant the device into the eyes of two blind patients have been conducted at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. The device — the first of its kind — incorporates a video camera and transmitter mounted on a pair of glasses. This is linked to an artificial retina, which transmits moving images along the optic nerve to the brain and enables the patient to discriminate rudimentary images of motion, light and dark. (Times Online – April 22, 2008)

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/health/article3790683.ece>

### **Simulating Surgery to Reduce Implant Complications**

A computer simulation breakthrough could mean fewer medical complications and better surgical outcomes for patients undergoing hip, knee or spinal implant surgery. Implant surgery has one of the most remarkable success rates in medical practice, with reliable, predictable outcomes and very few complications. But it is not complication free. Enter the EU-funded OrthoSim project. Set up to develop an orthopaedic surgery planning tool, OrthoSim has developed a platform that can significantly reduce the risk of post-op complications, as well as provide a means for testing new implant devices, the researchers claim. And in the very near future the platform will provide the base for a new surgical training tool. (Medical News Today – April 25, 2008)

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/105142.php>

**No LOL: Doctors don't answer e-mails**

Suzanne Kreuziger is a registered nurse who uses e-mail almost exclusively to communicate with friends. But when it comes to reaching her doctor, there's a frustrating firewall. The barrier is her doctor's own reluctance to talk to patients through e-mail. Kreuziger's experience is shared by most Americans: They want the convenience of e-mail for non-urgent medical issues, but fewer than a third of U.S. doctors use e-mail to communicate with patients, according to recent physician surveys. (Associated Press – April 22, 2008)

<http://www.cnn.com/2008/HEALTH/04/22/doctor.email.ap/index.html>

**Number of General Surgeons In U.S. Declined By 26% Since 1981, Analysis Finds**

The ratio of practicing general surgeons to patients in the U.S. declined by 26% between 1981 and 2005, according to an analysis published Monday in the Archives of Surgery, Reuters reports. For the analysis, Dana Lynge, a general surgeon at the University of Washington in Seattle, and a team of researchers examined data from the American Medical Association. Researchers found that the number of general surgeons declined by 4% overall, while the U.S. population increased by 29% to 292 million from 1981 to 2005. The analysis also found that the number of general surgeons who enter the field each year – about 1,000 – remained steady during that time period. (Reuters – April 23, 2008)

<http://www.medilexicon.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=105028>

**Bypass Surgery Improved by a Robot**

Coronary bypass is a common operation in America, but a drastic one, too. To reach the heart and replace the blocked blood vessels that supply it, surgeons literally have to break open one's breastbone. But at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore, doctors have been trying an alternative: a system known as da Vinci. Instead of opening a patient's chest, they make a few small incisions to insert tiny robot arms. At a weekend meeting of the American Surgical Association, it was reported that the first hundred patients on whom they operated did very well. They spent three fewer days, on average, in the hospital. They needed about a third as many blood transfusions. (ABC News – April 27, 2008)

<http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=4732534&page=1>

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