



The Cutting Edge

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Surgical Outcomes Depend on a Host of Variables

New studies show that numerous factors -- such as the number of operations done by a surgeon or at a hospital -- affect patient outcomes for various surgical procedures. The findings were to be presented Wednesday at the Digestive Diseases Week 2008 meeting, in San Diego. "The research presented [at the meeting] sheds new light on our understanding of the influences of high-volume vs. low-volume hospitals or surgeons, as well as the influences of demographics such as patient's race, location or insurance coverage," Cruz-Correa said. (HealthDay News – May 21, 2008)

More at <http://www.healthscout.com/news/1/615701/main.html>

Government ads to show consumers how hospitals rate

The federal government is spending nearly \$1.9 million on newspaper ads around the country that disclose hospital satisfaction rates, part of a unique campaign to improve health care through the power of publicity. The full-page ads will show for better or worse how patients rated more than 2,500 hospitals nationwide. The ads feature two questions: The percentage of patients who always got help when they needed it. And the percentage of patients who got antibiotics one hour before surgery. The latter question reflects broad interest in curbing infections acquired at the hospital. (Associated Press – May 21, 2008)

More at <http://www.charlotte.com/559/story/633187.html>

Calgary woman recovering after robotic arm removes brain tumour

A surgical team in Calgary on Friday extolled the virtues of using a robotic arm to perform groundbreaking surgery to remove a woman's brain tumour. Paige Nickason, 21, was discharged from the Foothills Medical



Centre after surgery Monday by Dr. Garnette Sutherland of the University of Calgary. "Paige's brain surgery represents a technical achievement in the use of image-guided robotic technology to remove a relatively complex brain tumour," Sutherland told a press conference. "This is wonderful and represents the beginning of something new in surgical care," he said. (CBC News – May 16, 2008)
More at <http://www.cbc.ca/technology/story/2008/05/16/robotic-surgery.html?ref=rss>

Surgical Treatment for Nerve Damage

Patients suffering from peripheral neuropathy, a painful, sometimes numbing nerve damage now have a surgical treatment option. Diabetes is the main cause of condition, but lupus and lyme disease can also trigger it. The pain often comes from compressed and swollen nerves. The surgery works to relieve that compression. It works, says University of Chicago plastic surgeon Ginard Henry, but only in carefully chosen patients whose nerve damage is in specific locations. "Peripheral neuropathy is not always treated by surgery and you need to make sure that the patient knows what their option is," Dr. Henry explained. (NBC News – May 16, 2008)

More at <http://www.11alive.com/news/health/story.aspx?storyid=116001&catid=13>

The Value of a Human Life: \$129,000

In theory, a year of human life is priceless. In reality, it's worth \$50,000. That's the international standard most private and government-run health insurance plans worldwide use to determine whether to cover a new medical procedure. More simply, insurance companies calculate that to make a treatment worth its cost, it must guarantee one year of "quality life" for \$50,000 or less. New research, however, would argue that that figure is far too low. Stanford economists have demonstrated that the average value of a year of quality human life is actually closer to about \$129,000. To get to that number, Stefanos Zenios and his colleagues at Stanford Graduate School of Business used kidney dialysis as a benchmark. (TIME – May 20, 2008)

More at <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1808049,00.html>

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