



The Cutting Edge

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IN THIS ISSUE:

New Data on Rates and Risk Factors of Patient Awareness During Anesthesia

Surgeons may benefit from pre-op warm-up exercises

A Robotic Snake To Fix Broken Hearts And Organs

Surgeons Remove Donated Kidney Through Vagina

CNN Story Helps Surgeon Perform 'Lifesaving' Op

New Data on Rates and Risk Factors of Patient Awareness During Anesthesia

How many patients experience unwanted awareness during general anesthesia for surgery? The true rate is low but difficult to determine, while certain factors seem to increase the risk, according to a pair of studies in the February issue of *Anesthesia & Analgesia*, official journal of the International Anesthesia Research Society (IARS). "It's hard to study something that's rare," comments Dr. Steven L. Shafer of Columbia University, Editor-in-Chief of *Anesthesia & Analgesia*. "Because intraoperative awareness is an important issue but a rare occurrence, anesthesiologists are using a variety of research methods to increase their understanding of the problem." (IARS – February 11, 2009)

More at <http://newswise.com/articles/view/548998/>

Surgeons may benefit from pre-op warm-up exercises

The increasing use of robotic and minimally invasive surgery means doctors today need to have superb manual dexterity and fine-motor skills. These operations involve inserting a tiny camera and instruments into small openings in the body to cut, remove or mend tissues. A new study suggests that surgeons may benefit from pre-operative warm-up exercises to prepare them for the cognitive and physical challenges ahead. The study, from researchers at Arizona State University, found that 15 to 20 minutes of simple exercises leads to a substantial increase in the proficiency of surgical skills by raising alertness and protecting against fatigue. (LA Times – February 9, 2009)

More at <http://www.newsday.com/news/health/ny-hssurg10-nws,0,4985400.story>



A Robotic Snake To Fix Broken Hearts And Organs

A snake is probably the last thing you'd ever want crawling around your heart. But in the case of a new American-Israeli invention called the CardioARM, this medical "snake" device may one day save your life. The new Israeli-American invention came by way of some brainstorming between Israel's Dr. Alon Wolf and his American colleague Prof. Howie Choset, when Wolf was working as a researcher at Carnegie Mellon University in the US. "Both Howie and myself are experts in snake robotics," says Wolf, who is now based at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa. "We are working with robotic snakes for search and rescue operations. So we started in the back of our minds thinking: if we can send snakes to crawl inside buildings to look for survivors, then why can't we send the same snake inside our body to fix it?" (Medical News Today – January 26, 2009)

More at <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/136677.php>

Surgeons Remove Donated Kidney Through Vagina

It's a groundbreaking approach to kidney transplantation. For the first time ever, surgeons at Johns Hopkins have removed a donor kidney through a patient's vagina. Doctors say the goal is to make organ retrieval easier for patients, reports CBS station WJZ-TV in Baltimore. The scar left after Kimberly Johnson's gallbladder surgery is significantly larger than any of the marks that remain after her latest procedure. The 48-year-old donated a kidney to her niece, Jennifer, Thursday. (CBS – February 6, 2009)

More at <http://wbztv.com/health/kidney.through.vagina.2.928608.html>

CNN Story Helps Surgeon Perform 'Lifesaving' Op

A brain surgeon performed what he called a "life-saving" surgery on a teenager by removing a large brain tumor using a method he read about on CNN.com just three days earlier. Dr. Thomas Ellis, a senior neurosurgeon at Wake Forest University School of Medicine in North Carolina, the United States, said he had become "very demoralized" after an unsuccessful six-hour operation to remove a tumor from a 19-year-old named Brandon. "I had had to give the boy's mother the bad news and that is not something I am used to. She was crying and it was very hard. Your story truly came at the perfect time," Ellis said. The article was about the "Omni directional dielectric mirror," a pen-shaped fiber-optic tool that allows surgeons to carry out minimally invasive surgery on areas too difficult or delicate to access. (CNN – January 29, 2009)

More at http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/01/29/tumor.surgery.lifesaving/index.html?eref=rss_topstories

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