



# The Cutting Edge

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### **First-Ever Implant of Self-Contained Artificial Heart**

Surgeons at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital became the first in the nation to successfully implant a self-contained artificial heart in a patient since its approval by the Food and Drug Administration. The patient, a 76-year-old man, did not qualify for a heart transplant or other available therapies and was determined to be in severe end-stage heart failure. He therefore becoming eligible for the innovative procedure through the implant of the AbioCor, Total Replacement Heart — the world's first completely self-contained, fully implantable artificial heart. The device, approved by the FDA in 2006, is also the first internal artificial organ. (Courier News – June 24, 2009)

More at <http://www.mycentraljersey.com/article/20090624/NEWS/906240347/1003/NEWS01>

### **Minimally Invasive Surgery Not Better for Sciatica**

Minimally invasive surgery for the excruciating back pain that can be caused by sciatica didn't work as well as the conventional procedure in a Dutch study. "The expected treatment benefit of a faster rate of recovery from sciatica after tubular discectomy could not be reproduced by this double-blind study," according to a report in the July 8 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association. Orthopedic surgeons at the Medical Center Haaglanden studied 328 people who underwent surgery for sciatic pain, and found that "the overall differences in pain intensity and recovery rates favored the conventional microdiscectomy." (JAMA – July 7, 2009)

More at [https://www.caremark.com/wps/portal/HEALTH\\_RESOURCES?article=healthday/705249](https://www.caremark.com/wps/portal/HEALTH_RESOURCES?article=healthday/705249)



#### **Assessment of Bone Growth Stimulator Is Mixed**

A relatively new agent that stimulates the creation of new bone as part of spinal fusion surgery is being increasingly used in the United States, although costs and some complication rates also appear to be higher with its use, a new study reports. The therapeutic agent, known as bone-morphogenetic protein, or BMP, is now used in at least 25 percent of spinal fusion surgeries. The study found that more complications occurred in procedures involving the front part of the neck – anterior cervical fusions – when BMP was used. (JAMA – June 30, 2009)

More at <http://www.hon.ch/News/HSN/628583.html>

#### **4 out of 106 Heart Replacement Valves from Pig Hearts Failed**

Pig heart valves used to replace defective aortic valves in human patients failed much earlier and more often than expected, says a report from cardiac surgeons at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. This is the first report to demonstrate this potential problem, the researchers say. Between 2001 and 2005, four out of 106 patients with the pig valves implanted in the aortic position developed severe impairment after less than four years, and the patients required surgery to replace the valves. The findings are published in the June issue of the Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery. (JTCS – June 29, 2009)

More at <http://www.scienceblog.com/cms/4-out-106-heart-replacement-valves-pig-hearts-failed-22705.html>

#### **Want a Mini-Facelift? Surgeons Advise Getting a Second Opinion**

Now face-lifts themselves are being branded. Certain minimally invasive procedures are marketed directly to patients in a one-size-fits-most approach. Patients pick an operation — usually after seeing it touted online, on TV or in magazines — and are referred by a national organization to a doctor. Two procedures sold this way are the Lifestyle Lift, which an ad in Family Circle describes as "revolutionary" and a way to "remove wrinkles, frown lines and sagging skin" in about an hour; and the QuickLift, which also benefits from nationwide marketing that promotes a short recovery and only local anesthesia. But some surgeons say branded face-lifts can be problematic. (New York Times – July 2, 2009)

More at [http://www.insidebayarea.com/bay-area-living/ci\\_12767374](http://www.insidebayarea.com/bay-area-living/ci_12767374)

\*\*\*GENERAL HEALTHCARE Articles\*\*\*

#### **Unsung Heroes Work Hard to Cut Hospital-Acquired Infections**

For years, Alfonso Torress-Cook followed the rules in his quest to eliminate hospital-acquired infections. Patients at his hospital received large doses of antibiotics and were scrubbed down with alcohol-based soaps, as he and his colleagues aimed to kill every bacterium possible. Search and destroy was the mantra. Still, patients became sick with bacterial infections after checking in. Some died. "I never saw anything change. I saw things getting worse," Torress-Cook said. Torress-Cook eventually joined Pacific Hospital of Long Beach, in California, where as director of epidemiology and patient safety, he changed the rules and slashed the number of patients who become infected. (CNN – July 9, 2009)

More at <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/07/09/hospital.acquired.infections/index.html>

#### **Fewer Calories Equals a Longer Life – At Least in Monkeys**

Cutting daily calorie intake by 30 percent may put the brakes on the aging process, have beneficial effects on the brain, and result in a longer life span, according to a new 20-year study of monkeys published in the journal Science. Calorie restriction needs to be done carefully in order not to turn into malnutrition, say experts. The study confirms in primates what's long been known in other species, including mice, worms, and flies. And it's no surprise to the humans who have taken the animal research to heart and adopted calorie restriction as a means to a (hopefully) longer and healthier life. (CNN – July 9, 2009)

More at <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/07/09/caloric.restriction.monkeys/index.html>



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