



The Cutting Edge

November 13, 2009

The Cutting Edge Newsletter (November 13, 2009)

News for the OR Professional

Published by Surgical Information Systems

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Kicking the Smoking Habit Improves Surgical Outcomes

The scientific evidence is clear – smoking has a direct negative impact on postoperative outcomes. Quitting smoking is one of the best things people can do to improve their chances of recovering from surgery without complications. “Anesthesiologists are the heart and lung specialists in the operating room, making sure our patients’ vital functions are working properly,” said David O. Warner, M.D., chair of the ASA Smoking Cessation Initiative Task Force. “Every year, we care for up to 10 million smokers in surgery. (1,2) , We see the immense toll that smoking takes on a person’s body, but we also witness the tremendous benefits patients who stop smoking before surgery experience in their healing process.” Because patients are advised to abstain from smoking for as long as possible both before and after surgery, it represents a golden opportunity for people to take action to quit. (ASA – November 9, 2009)

More at <http://www.newswise.com/articles/kicking-the-smoking-habit-improves-surgical-outcomes>



Canadian Doctor Uses Glue to Aid Open-Heart Recovery

A new surgical technique using glue to repair breastbones intentionally broken during open-heart surgery speeds up recovery time and is "substantially less painful" for patients, a University of Calgary scientist said on Thursday. The standard practice in operating rooms is to sew the breastbone back together with wire after open-heart surgery. That procedure takes weeks to heal and often requires strong pain medication to withstand, said Dr. Paul Fedak, a cardiac surgeon at Foothills Medical Center in Calgary, Alberta, and a scientist at the university's faculty of medicine. "We can now heal the breastbone in hours instead of weeks after open-heart surgery," Fedak, who pioneered the new procedure, said in a statement. (Reuters – November 12, 2009)

More at

<http://www.canada.com/health/Canadian+doctor+uses+glue+open+heart+recovery/2215879/story.html>

Impotence Fears Over Robotic Surgery

New evidence suggests that robotic prostate cancer surgery, far from being the saviour of men, is leaving them with more incontinence and impotence than traditional techniques. The study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, has sparked renewed debate over robotically assisted surgery, and over how much surgeons should be obliged to tell patients about their success rates. However, the pioneers of robotic surgery in Australia have defended the procedure, saying the research was flawed. The paper compared the long-term results of "minimally invasive" prostate surgery, which is usually performed using robots, with old-fashioned "open" surgery. It found that robotic assistance meant men left hospital a day earlier and they were 10 times less likely to need a blood transfusion. (JAMA – October 24, 2009)

More at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/impotence-fears-over-robotic-surgery-20091023-hdfo.html>

"On-Pump" Heart Bypass Surgery Beats Out Beating-Heart Technique

The best bypass surgery choice may be to use a heart–lung machine, after all, according to a new study published Thursday in The New England Journal of Medicine. Surprising many in the field, off-pump surgery did not win out in a large comparison study—and actually resulted in patients who were slightly more likely to need additional operations or to have heart attacks. Some patients who have had open-heart surgery while hooked up to a heart–lung machine have complained of a cognitive cloudiness that set in after their procedure. The machine, also called a cardiopulmonary-bypass pump, keeps the blood circulating and oxygenated while the heart is stopped for the operation, but some have worried that it can have long-term effects on the brain. (The New England Journal of Medicine – November 5, 2009)

More at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/post.cfm?id=on-pump-heart-bypass-surgery-beats-2009-11-05>

Lap Band Surgery Effective For Morbidly Obese Children

A surgeon at Children's National Medical Center and his colleagues from New York University have found laparoscopic adjustable gastric banding (Lap band) to improve the health of morbidly obese adolescents. The study, published in the Journal of the American College of Surgeons, involved nearly 50 girls and boys ages 14-17. The participants showed significant decreases in total and android fat mass 2 years after surgery. Android fat has been linked to the development of obesity-related illnesses, such as diabetes, heart disease, and insulin resistance. The study found that Lap band surgery improved glucose metabolism, reducing the adolescents' risk of developing insulin resistance. Additionally, bone mineral density was not impacted by the surgery, suggesting that bone growth is not affected. (JACS – November 4, 2009)

More at

http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/1780444/lap_band_surgery_effective_for_morbidly_obese_children/in dex.html



GENERAL HEALTHCARE Articles

The Artificial Hand That Can 'Feel'

Researchers are working on a breakthrough in artificial limb technology -- a prosthetic hand that can actually feel. The SmartHand project is funded by the European Union and is a collaboration between researchers from across the continent. It has produced a prototype motorized prosthetic hand that researchers say gives unprecedented sensory feedback. Fredrik Sebelius, of Lund University, in Sweden, is one of those working on the project. He told CNN that the SmartHand is able to exploit the fact that many amputees experience what he terms a "phantom hand." "If you push the skin on an amputee's forearm, they feel like you are pushing on their phantom fingers," Sebelius told CNN. When an amputee imagines moving a "phantom hand," signals are sent down nerve fibres in the remaining part of the amputated arm to activate muscles that would have moved the fingers. (CNN – November 6, 2009)

More at <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/11/06/artificial.hand.feel/index.html>

Lower Cholesterol May Lessen Risk of Some Cancers

Most people know that healthy cholesterol levels can help protect your heart. But new research suggests another potential benefit: a lower risk of developing some types of cancer. In fact, low total cholesterol is associated with about 60 percent less risk of the most aggressive form of prostate cancer, and higher levels of good cholesterol (HDL) may protect against lung, liver, and other cancers, according to two studies published this week in the journal Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention. That's quite a reversal of fortune for low cholesterol, which has, in the past, been associated with a higher cancer risk. The new studies suggest that low cholesterol may not deserve its bad reputation, earned from a series of studies in the 1980s that said people with low cholesterol might be at risk of cancer. (CNN – November 9, 2009)

More at <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/11/09/cholesterol.cancer/index.html>

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