



The Cutting Edge

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Ailing U.S. Economy Delivers a Blow to 'Medical Tourism'

Fewer U.S. patients are traveling abroad for non-emergency medical procedures, such as hip replacements or cosmetic surgery, because of the recession. From 2007 to 2009, the number of Americans traveling abroad for elective medical procedures is expected to have fallen as much as 13.6%, according to a report by the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions, a research center focused on trends in the health care system. Rising transportation costs and decreased consumer incomes and savings probably contributed to the fall in medical tourism, the report says. During the recession, patients also may have opted to forgo non-emergency procedures, the bulk of medical tourism. (USA Today – November 30, 2009)
More at http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-11-30-Medicaltourism30_st_N.htm

Burnout and Mental Distress Strongly Related To Errors by U.S. Surgeons

Major medical errors self-reported by American surgeons are strongly related to both burnout and depression. Those findings appear in the online edition of Annals of Surgery. The Mayo Clinic-led study included collaborators from Johns Hopkins and the American College of Surgeons. In the confidential study, nearly 9 percent of U.S. surgeons responding said they made a major error in the three months prior to being surveyed. Over 70 percent attributed the error to themselves rather than a systemic or organizational cause. Results showed the components of surgeon burnout - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and perception personal accomplishments - were related to errors; as was surgeons' "mental quality of life" including depression. (ACS – November 26, 2009)
More at <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/172228.php>

**Robot Surgery Safe in Kids, but Outcomes No Better**

Robotic surgery is safe for use in children, but there's little evidence that outcomes for this type of surgery are any better than they are with standard operations, the authors of a new review of medical studies published in Pediatrics conclude. Robotic surgery-in which a surgeon controls robotic instruments from outside the patient's body, in some cases even from far away-offers several advantages, including ways to eliminate hand tremors and improve the surgeon's vision and depth perception. These advantages can be particularly important when performing complex procedures in children's smaller, more delicate bodies. (Pediatrics – November 16, 2009)

More at <http://www.postchronicle.com/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi?archive=169&num=268206>

Timing of Surgery for Knee Injuries May Not Affect Outcomes

Multiple-ligament knee injuries resulting from traumatic knee dislocations – such as high impact car accidents or certain sports are uncommon, and the optimal timing of surgical repair or reconstruction has not been definitively established. According to a new study published in the December 2009 issue of The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery (JBJS), patients who undergo surgery more than three weeks after a multiple ligament knee injury (called chronic intervention treatment) may have comparable outcomes to those who undergo surgery within three weeks of injury (called acute intervention treatment) with regard to knee stability. Additionally, researchers found that early mobility is associated with better outcomes than immobilization in those patients who are treated within that three week time period. (JBJS – December 1, 2009)

More at <http://www.orthosupersite.com/view.asp?rID=51069>

Doctors Use Social Networks to Educate Patients

Twitter, Facebook and YouTube aren't just for entertainment anymore. Wolf and doctors around Florida and the rest of the country are using the social networking tools to bring patients' families and the general public into operating rooms, sometimes sharing step-by-step medical procedures. They favor the real-time updates and videos as a way to reduce the fear factor of surgeries and educate people about the realities of certain procedures, especially new ones. Earlier this year, surgeons at a Detroit hospital used Twitter to report the blow-by-blow steps of an operation to remove a kidney tumor. (AP – November 16, 2009)

More at <http://www.gazette.com/articles/social-67080-doctors-use.html>

GENERAL HEALTHCARE Articles

Decrease in Smoking Extends Life Span, but Obesity May Curb Gains

Although fewer people are smoking -- and therefore less likely to die from cigarette-related causes -- the obesity epidemic may negate any gains in life span, according to a new study. By 2020, the typical 18-year-old will gain 0.31 years due to the drop in smoking rates (above and beyond life span increases caused by other factors). But the increase in obesity rates during the same period will reduce life expectancy by 1.02 years, the researchers say. During the next 10 years, in other words, we'll lose 0.71 years of our life span, time that we would have gained if so many people weren't overweight, according to the estimates published this week in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM). (CNN – December 3, 2009)

More at <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/12/03/obesity.smoking.lifespan/index.html>

Adult Stem Cells Repair Heart Attack Damage

Adult stem cells may help repair heart tissue damaged by heart attack according to the findings of a new study to be published in the December 8 issue of the Journal of the American College of Cardiology. Results from the Phase I study show stem cells from donor bone marrow appear to help heart attack patients recover better by growing new blood vessels to bring more oxygen to the heart. Researchers say it is the strongest evidence thus far indicating that adult stem cells can actually differentiate, or turn into heart cells to repair damage. Until now, it has been believed that only embryonic stem cells could differentiate into heart or other organ cells. (JACC – December 2, 2009)

More at <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/172806.php>



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