



# The Cutting Edge

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### **Bedside Skills Trump Medical Technology**

Sometimes, a simple bedside exam performed by a skilled physician is superior to a high-tech CT scan, a Loyola University Health System study has found. Researchers found that physicians' bedside exams did a better job than CT scans in predicting which patients would need to return to the operating room to treat complications such as bleeding. Patients typically receive CT scans following open brain surgery to remove tumors, repair aneurysms, treat brain injuries, etc. But practices vary. Some surgeons order CT scans right after surgery. Others wait until the following morning. (Journal of Neurosurgery – December 18, 2009)

More at [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2009-12/luhs-dbs121509.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-12/luhs-dbs121509.php)

### **Surgical Quality Program is a Strong Tool for Assessing Outcomes for High-Risk Procedures**

New research published in the December issue of the Journal of the American College of Surgeons finds that the American College of Surgeons National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (ACS NSQIP) is a powerful tool for assessing outcomes of uncommon, high-risk surgical procedures, including pancreatic necrosectomy. This is the first time that national data on this particular procedure has been available and analyzed, and the data from ACS NSQIP showed that patients undergoing pancreatic necrosectomy had better outcomes than predicted. ACS NSQIP is a nationally validated, outcomes-based, risk-adjusted, peer-controlled program for the measurement and enhancement of quality surgical care. (JACS – December 10, 2009)

More at [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2009-12/wsw-sqp120909.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-12/wsw-sqp120909.php)



### **Stem Cell Glue Saves Climber's Leg**

Andrew Kent broke his leg so badly while rock climbing in the Lake District that traditional surgery failed. Doctors then used his own stem cells to heal the bones in a technique they believe could revolutionise orthopaedic operations. Surgeons warned that he was likely to lose his leg unless they tried the new stem cell technique. Orthopaedic surgeon Anan Shetty removed stem cells from the bone marrow in his patient's hip. These were mixed with a new collagen gel called Cartifill to make a paste, which was smeared into the fractures. They finally fixed his leg in a metal cage to gently squeeze the bones together. The cage was removed at the beginning of December, six months after the stem cell procedure. (Sky News – December 16, 2009)

More at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,580360,00.html>

### **Heart Bypass Surgery Question Solved**

When patients require heart bypass surgery, they don't quiz the surgeon about his or her technique. They just want their heart repaired. But there's some interesting science that played out in operating rooms in recent years, and on the pages of the New England Journal of Medicine in November. Surgeons for decades performed open heart surgery with the help of a heart-lung machine, which allows the patient's heart to lay still while they sew healthy blood vessels around blocked ones. By around 2001, many surgeons were doing the surgery "off-pump," with the heart beating, believing that would reduce the risk of stroke, memory problems or personality changes that occurred with some patients who had the surgery on pump. Believing — but without any evidence. (The Post-Standard – December 7, 2009)

More at [http://blog.syracuse.com/healthfitness/2009/12/heart\\_bypass\\_surgery\\_question.html](http://blog.syracuse.com/healthfitness/2009/12/heart_bypass_surgery_question.html)

### **Clot Risk After Surgery Warning**

The risk of a blood clot after surgery is higher and lasts longer than previously thought, say researchers at the University of Oxford. Data from almost a million women found surgery increased the risk 70 times in the six weeks after an operation. Clots are most likely with hip, knee and cancer surgery, they reported in the British Medical Journal. Surgeons said guidelines on giving preventive treatment should be updated in light of the findings. It is already known that surgery, especially joint surgery, increases the chance of a blood clot developing, but the scale of the risk and how long it lasted for has not been clear. (BBC – December 4, 2009)

More at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8393368.stm>

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

### **Health Care Spending Spurs Economic Growth**

As the national discussion of health care focuses on costs, a new study from North Carolina State University shows that it might be more accurate to think of health care spending as an investment that can spur economic growth. The study also shows that government projections of health care costs and financing may be unduly pessimistic. "Health care spending should be viewed as an investment in future capital, contributing to a productive workforce, rather than merely as an expenditure," says Dr. Al Headen. People are living longer, Headen says, and are retaining their ability to be productive members of society – they are able to work, pay taxes, consume goods and go on vacation. "But a lot of projections by the government of the future work force are not accounting for improved health and productivity of older Americans." (NCSU – December 14, 2009)

More at <http://www.physorg.com/news180027478.html>

### **Top 10 Health Innovations of 2009**

No one doubts that the most high-profile health crisis of 2009 was the unexpected outbreak of H1N1 – the swine flu virus that has claimed almost 10,000 lives, according to the World Health Organization. The worldwide pandemic was on the front page of every major news outlet for months on end as people struggled to understand the impact of the first such flu outbreak in over 40 years. But this year has also seen other important health innovations, all of which we might have thought were impossible, or many



more years away, a mere 12 months ago. Some, such as the "Electric Eye," a microchip invented by university researchers that will help blind people regain partial eyesight, are still in the development stage. Others, such as the \$20 knee joint developed by a group of students at Stanford University, are in the early stages of production. But all of them are products that could have very real and important benefits for the health of patients around the world. (CNN – December 15, 2009)

More at <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/12/14/top.health.innovations.2009/index.html>

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