



The Cutting Edge

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Level of Frailty Predicts Surgical Outcomes in Older Patients

Nurse Certification Linked to Job/Career Satisfaction, Reveals New National Survey

General Surgery Residency Programs Lack Capacity to Address Shortage

Best Practices for Minimally Invasive Procedures

Personalized Genetic Pain Treatment May Not Be Far Away

(General Healthcare) Are Too Many People Taking Heartburn Drugs?

(General Healthcare) Caffeine Helps Shift Workers Avoid Mistakes

Level of Frailty Predicts Surgical Outcomes in Older Patients

A simple, 10-minute "frailty" test administered to older patients before they undergo surgery can predict with great certainty their risk for complications, how long they will stay in the hospital and — most strikingly — whether they are likely to end up in a nursing home afterward, new research suggests. The key is a means of measuring frailty using a five-point scale, developed at Johns Hopkins. It includes loss of 10 pounds or more within the previous year, weakness as measured by a handheld dynamometer, exhaustion, low physical activity and slowed walking. On the scale, one point is given for each problem. Scores of 4 or 5 mean that patients are considered frail; 2 or 3 mean they are considered intermediately frail. The test for frailty is simple to perform, taking just 10 minutes to complete. In a study reported online and in the June issue of the Journal of the American College of Surgeons, Makary and his team applied the frailty test to 594 patients over age 65 who had elective surgery between July 2005 and July 2006. (JACS – May 12, 2010)

More at http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-05/jhmi-lof051210.php



Nurse Certification Linked to Job/Career Satisfaction, Reveals New National Survey

Nurses certified in critical care indicate greater satisfaction with their jobs and careers and report higher perceptions of empowerment than their non-certified peers, reports the first national study to examine these issues in tandem. "Certification, Empowerment, and Intent to Leave Current Position and the Profession Among Critical Care Nurses" — by Joyce Fitzpatrick, RN, MBA, PhD, FAAN, Elizabeth Brooks Ford professor of nursing, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, and colleagues — appears in the May issue of American Journal of Critical Care (AJCC). Conclusions of the study affirm that specialty certified nurses are more empowered and less likely to leave their current position. "Employers will want to invest in recruiting and retaining certified nurses. Not only does attrition represent a significant unnecessary expense, certified nurses bring the knowledge, experience and confidence that are essential for high-quality patient care and smooth functioning of organizations," says Karen Harvey, RN, MSN, AACN certification programs specialist. (April 28, 2010 – AJCC)

More at <http://ehstoday.com/health/news/nurse-certification-linked-job-satisfaction-8462/>

General Surgery Residency Programs Lack Capacity to Address Shortage

Current residency programs do not have the capacity to address the growing shortage of general surgeons, according to survey research presented at the Sixth Annual Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Physician Workforce Research Conference in Alexandria, Va. In addition to expanding the existing 246 accredited general surgeon residency programs in the U.S., new training programs and an increase in funding will be required to meet the growing need for general surgeons, according to Anthony G. Charles MD, MPH, FACS, the study's lead researcher. Dr. Charles is an assistant professor of surgery in the Department of Surgery at the University of North Carolina and a researcher at the American College of Surgeons Health Policy Research Institute, both located in Chapel Hill, N.C. His presentation at AAMC was entitled "The Surgeon Shortage: Can We Solve the Surgeon Shortage with a Surge in Residents Trained by Existing Residency Programs?" (May 9, 2010 – AAMC)

More at <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/188113.php>

Best Practices for Minimally Invasive Procedures

Techniques and instrumentation for minimally invasive surgical procedures originated in gynecologic surgery, but the benefits of surgery with small incisions or no incisions at all have prompted the expansion of these techniques into numerous specialties. Technologies such as robotic assistance, single-incision laparoscopic surgery, natural orifice transluminal endoscopic surgery, and video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery have led to the continued expansion of minimally invasive surgery into new specialties. With this expansion, perioperative nurses and other members of the surgical team are required to continue to learn about new technology and instrumentation, as well as the techniques and challenges involved in using new technology, to help ensure the safety of their patients. This article explores the development of minimally invasive procedures and offers suggestions for increasing patient safety. (May 2010 – AORN Journal)

More at <http://www.aornjournal.org/article/PIIS0001209210002838/fulltext>

Personalized Genetic Pain Treatment May Not Be Far Away

In the not too distant future, it may be possible to discern an individual's genetic predisposition to chronic pain conditions and treat them proactively to prevent lifetime afflictions, according to research presented today at the American Pain Society's annual scientific meeting. In his keynote address to some 2,000 pain clinicians attending the APS conference, noted neuro-genetic researcher Clifford Woolf, MD, PhD, professor of neurology and neurobiology, Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital Boston, said that advances in genetic research will help identify individuals genetically at risk for developing pain and foster personalized pain medicine. Knowing an individual's genetic predisposition for pain, for example, will show who is at high risk for developing chronic pain from herpes zoster virus (shingles) and which surgical patients are likely to have prolonged or even permanent post-operative pain from nerves damaged during surgery. (May 6, 2010 – APS)

More at <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/564262>



GENERAL HEALTHCARE Articles

Are Too Many People Taking Heartburn Drugs?

Too many people in the U.S. may be taking stomach-acid-suppressing drugs such as Nexium and Prevacid, new research suggests. The drugs, known as proton pump inhibitors, help those with serious stomach and digestive problems, but the risks may outweigh the benefits for people with less serious conditions, experts say. Proton pump inhibitors can have rare but serious side effects, including an increased risk of bacterial infection and bone fracture, according to several new studies in the Archives of Internal Medicine. Proton pump inhibitors are among the most commonly prescribed drugs in the U.S. In 2009, they were the third-largest class of drug in the country with \$13.6 billion in sales, representing more than 110 million prescriptions, according to IMS Health, a health-care market research firm. (May 10, 2010 – CNN)

More at <http://www.cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/05/10/heartburn.medicine.infections/index.html?npt=NP1>

Caffeine Helps Shift Workers Avoid Mistakes

Good news for javaholics: A new review suggests that caffeine consumption can help night-shift workers avoid making mistakes. At least 15 percent of workers in industrialized countries are thought to be engaged in shift work or permanent nighttime work, which can disrupt their body clocks. Some suffer from shift-work disorder, in which they only sleep for short periods of time and become sleepy on the job, boosting the risk of errors, the researchers explained. In the review, released online May 12 in The Cochrane Library, researchers looked at 13 studies into the effects of caffeine on shift-work performance. (May 12 – The Cochrane Library)

More at <http://news.health.com/2010/05/12/caffeine-helps-shift-workers-avoid-mistakes/>

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