

VA TAP – Technology Assessment WATCH – April 2004

---Issue on Surgery & Surgical Technology Assessment---

This E-mail newsletter, produced by the **VA Technology Assessment Program (VATAP)**, brings you health technology assessment (HTA) reports & resources in VA plus links to evidence-based resources from around the world:

patient care news you can use!

Recent HTA Reports From VATAP

Robotic Surgery: The VHA National Leadership Board Health Systems Committee, which advises the Under Secretary for Health on matters pertaining to VHA policy, planning and performance, requested information on robotic surgery in order to make recommendations on national policy for adopting this technology for use in VHA. VATAP was asked to provide a bibliographic list of completed health technology assessments and relevant literature on the subject. [HTTP://WWW.VA.GOV/VATAP/PUBS/SURGICALROBOTICS.PDF](http://www.va.gov/vatap/pubs/surgicalrobotics.pdf)

Recent HTA Reports on Surgical Topics From Around the Globe:

Percutaneous Intradiscal Radiofrequency Thermocoagulation for Chronic Discogenic Low Back Pain Low back pain is an extremely common condition that affects up to 20% of the U.S. population. Pain is caused by many different factors, including rupture or damage to the intervertebral disc. One method of percutaneous intradiscal radiofrequency thermocoagulation called intradiscal electrothermal therapy (IDET™, Smith+Nephew) permits controlled delivery of electrothermal heat to the intervertebral disc via a thermal resistive coil embedded within a navigable catheter. This report by Blue Cross Blue Shield found that the evidence does not permit conclusions as to whether percutaneous intradiscal radiofrequency thermocoagulation for chronic discogenic low back pain improves health outcomes or is as beneficial as established alternatives.

http://www.bcbs.com/tec/vol18/18_19.html

General guidelines for assessing, approving and introducing new procedures into a hospital or health service. The Australian Safety and Efficacy Register of New Interventional Procedures - Surgical (ASERNIP-S) 2003: 24, provides general guidance to hospitals and health services about the assessment of new surgical procedures and the factors that should be considered prior to their introduction. A new surgical procedure is defined as one that has not previously been used in that hospital or health service, and that represents a significant departure from previous practice.

http://www.surgeons.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ResearchandExternalAffairs/Research/ASERNIPS/ASERNIPSPublications/RACOS_new_proc.pdf

Cost effectiveness analysis of intensive versus conventional follow up after curative resection for colorectal cancer. The objective of the study was to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of intensive versus conventional follow-up of patients after curative resection for CRC. The rationale for the study was that intensive follow-up had already demonstrated

a favorable impact on patient survival, but that its economic implications were unclear. The study was conducted from the perspective of the health service within the National Health Service (NHS) and is reported in the BMJ, just click the link: **Cost effectiveness analysis of intensive versus conventional follow up after curative resection for colorectal cancer. BMJ Renehan et al. 328 (7431): 81.**

<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/328/7431/81/DC1>

Falls & The Gap Between Evidence & Practice:

From the Rand Organization: Preventing falls in older adults. Falls can rob older adults of functioning and independence. The most effective program for preventing falls is risk assessment and monitoring, focused on individuals with a history of falls. Exercise programs are also effective and could be implemented for a general population of older adults. **Full text of study in a BMJ article:** <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/328/7441/680>

More on improving quality of care for the elderly:

<http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB4545-1/>

Lack of Physician Concordance With Guidelines on the perioperative Use of beta-Blockers: The March 22, 2004 issue of Archives of Internal Medicine published an article, which provides an example of the gap between evidence and practice. The authors analyzed the perioperative use of beta-blockers in a tertiary center during a four-year period. They found that of the eligible patients only 30% were receiving beta-blockers. Cardiologists were four times more likely to prescribe beta-blockers compared to non-cardiologist physicians. <http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/164/6/664?etoc>

Check Out These Web Sites for News You Can Use:

Yes, a new **evidence-based** information website from the New Zealand Health Technology Assessment Unit, on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)

<http://www.cam.org.nz/> This site provides evidence-based information on the safety and efficacy of a range of CAM treatments. The site is brand new, the number of topics on the website will be built up over time. Some of the topics currently available on the site are:

- Spinal manipulation for low back pain
- Echinacea for the common cold
- Homeopathy for the flu

Morbidity & Mortality Rounds on the Web, a new Online Journal:

<http://www.webmm.ahrq.gov/> Produced by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Development (AHRQ), WebM&M is an "online journal and forum on patient safety and health care quality. This site features expert analysis of medical errors reported anonymously by our readers, interactive learning modules on patient safety and forums for online discussion. CME credit is available."

VA TAP produces evidence-based systematic reviews of the medical literature in response to requests for policy or clinical guidance sent through the Chief Officer of Patient Care Services. Our reports address the use of health care technologies (such as any device, process, drug, or therapeutic intervention) in the veteran population. For more information & access to all our publications, plus links to HTA resources around the world, check out the VA TAP websites: <http://www.va.gov/vatap> <http://vaww.va.gov/vatap>

Have a technology question? Ask the VA Technology Assessment Program to Assist

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