

What You Need to Know

Listening to music before surgery may reduce complications, virtual reality offers a look into predicted outcomes of procedures, the future of telehealth is in limbo, and more.

Music Soothes the Surgical Patient



Hypertension and anxiety during surgery can cause complications that may affect outcomes, but instead of using sedatives to calm the patient, surgical teams might consider reaching for headphones. Multiple research studies have shown that **when patients listen to music before surgery, they experience lower levels of hypertension**—reducing the need to treat their anxiety with medication.

In one clinical trial in France in 2018, patients who listened to music with headphones for 20 minutes before cataract surgery had a 13.6% incidence of hypertension compared to those who wore noise-canceling headphones without music, who experienced a 52.9% incidence of hypertension.

Researchers also observed reduced anxiety in similar studies for other procedures, including one comparison of patients who listened to live and/or recorded music before and during surgery to those who wore noise-blocking earmuffs with no music; those who received music therapy had lower anxiety scores preoperatively, and interestingly, patients who listened to live music of their choice before surgery also had a shorter recovery time than patients who listened to recorded music of their own choice before surgery—to the tune of 12.4 minutes.

Source: AJMC

Pediatrics — What If You Could See the Surgical Outcomes *Before* the Surgery?



Deciding whether to opt for surgery is difficult, especially for parents who only want the best for their child. If only there were a way to see into the future and know how it will turn out.

At Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London, there's the next best thing: **novel artificial intelligence (AI) software that can show the results of a cranial reshaping procedure** to treat sagittal synostosis, a condition in which the skull cannot grow sideways along with the brain. Instead of looking into a crystal ball, Amanda and Judd Michnowiec viewed a virtual reality projection of how the surgery would change the shape of their son's head—and what it would look like without surgical intervention. Doing nothing also presented the risk of speech and language delay and increased pressure around his brain.

Leveraging data from 60 operations over seven years, this groundbreaking technology has 90% accuracy in predicting the outcome of the procedure, which involves inserting a small spring into the skull to adjust head shape. Armed with this knowledge, what one neurosurgeon calls “truly informed consent,” the Michnowiecs felt reassured about making the right decision. They agreed to the surgery, and son Archie is doing well—just as expected.

Source: BBC

Patient Perspective — Patients Soon May Lose Their Voice in Telehealth



At the beginning of the pandemic, much of the world moved their business and social activities online—as well as their healthcare. Along with Zoom meetings, telehealth services boomed in usage, providing a safe, convenient way for patients to consult their doctors over video calls and get a diagnosis without leaving their homes.

But for some people in rural areas or living with economic hardship, telehealth came only via *telephone*, on an actual landline phone without cameras, apps, or even a keypad. This further compromised patient care because video provides another important tool for healthcare providers: the ability to see their patients.

Governments and health insurance companies eased rules on privacy, security, licensing, and reimbursement during the public health emergency, but as the world returns to a new normal, **audio-only telehealth is being phased out across the United States**. This spells bad news for patients who have come to rely on it, and in some cases have no other way of visiting a doctor. It also leaves hospitals and healthcare providers uncertain about how much they should invest in the future of telehealth.

Source: NPR

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Medication Safety — Medication in Moderation?



How many meds is too much? The American Society of Consultant Pharmacists says that older adults are taking 15 or more prescriptions a year, not counting over-the-counter drugs. The more medications you take, the greater the risk of harmful interactions and side effects, and as people age, the effects of the drugs also may change, potentially leading to dizziness and falls.

So it's important to periodically **ask a doctor or pharmacist to review everything you're taking** to look for duplicate drugs, dangerous combinations, and opportunities to stop or reduce the dosage of some meds. Maintain a list of current medications and try to fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy, as their software will be able to check for drug interactions. Other tips: Ask your doctor about nondrug options for treatment and be informed about what necessary medications do, how long you should take them, and possible side effects to watch for.

Source: Yahoo

Mental Health — Help for the Holidays



Stressed over the holidays? That's normal, especially during COVID times, which adds uncertainty and anxiety on top of all the other concerns of shopping, cooking, cleaning, and planning festivities. The Mayo Clinic has some **tips to help you cope with the less joyous aspects of the season**, such as acknowledging your feelings of grief or sadness, reaching out to others if you feel lonely, setting aside differences between family and friends, learning to say no when you're overextended, sticking to healthy habits—and more. Most importantly, if your sadness and anxiety don't go away or worsen, or begin to affect your physical health, seek help from a professional.

Source: The Mayo Clinic

How Suicide Can Spread—and Be Prevented

According to the CDC, suicide is the second-leading cause of death in teens and young adults in the United States. This is particularly true during the pandemic and on college campuses, where a suicide may result in the phenomenon of “suicide contagion,” inciting more deaths among students and peers. Preventing this spread is one reason why quick and coordinated communication from campus leaders and easy access to mental health resources is so important.

Julie Cerel, director of the University of Kentucky's Suicide Prevention and Exposure Lab, says that each suicide affects about 135 people; Cerel is one of several experts who **share their “suicide postvention” strategies**, which first and foremost includes creating a “suicide postvention” plan to help respond to a tragedy before it happens.

The plan should include feedback from students themselves about what they need and the best way to keep them informed. It also requires a delicate balance of respecting the wishes of the family of the student who died; telling the community what happened, heading off speculation without revealing too many details; avoiding a legal quagmire; providing counseling and resources to anyone who needs it; and giving everyone the opportunity to process and grieve in a positive way.

Source: Kaiser Health News

Infection Prevention — Mental Health Linked to COVID Risk



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently added mental health conditions to their list of high-risk conditions that make one eligible for a COVID-19 booster (which has since been authorized for all adults). This was in recognition of multiple research studies that have drawn a line between mental illness and increased risk for infection, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

There are myriad explanations for this underacknowledged link: We already know that mental health is related to poorer health, medical neglect, and chronic comorbidities such as diabetes and heart problems, and an overall shorter life expectancy—often exacerbated by their social ostracization, which puts increased stress on the body and compromises their physical health, as well as side effects from the very medications used to treat their mental illnesses.

Mental illness also can affect behavior, potentially decreasing their likelihood of taking precautions like social distancing and masking, particularly when homelessness and substance abuse (also linked to mental health conditions) are involved. Just as treating behavioral health conditions can be challenging because of lack of awareness and access to interventions and services, protecting those with mental health illnesses from COVID-19 and getting them vaccinated requires vigilance and the active involvement of both families and healthcare providers.

Source: MPR News

DO YOU KNOW A PATIENT SAFETY HERO?

SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATION BY DECEMBER 10, 2021

The banner features a silhouette of a superhero on the left, the IAPS logo in the center, and a red box on the right containing the text. The background shows a city skyline.



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