Selected news items and updates for the practicing clinician

Zachary Mulkey MD

• If primary care physicians are trained appropriately they can identify and treat obstructive sleep apnea as well as sleep specialists using a sleep lab and for a substantially lower cost. This is according to a recent publication from JAMA. See a review here.

• This flu season seems to have confused Google’s flu tracker algorithms. The search company has been predicting flu trends in the US since 2008 and has been as accurate as the CDC’s own data and also a few days faster, until this season. Google tracks the number of flu-related searches it processes and uses models to predict flu activity. Click here for an overview from Nature.

• Overall hospital-associated infections increased in 2011 but the totals were less than what the CDC predicted. Catheter-related blood stream infections in particular had a drop of 41% compared to CDC expectations. Click here for a news story.

• “Cryptogenic stroke” may often be stroke events related to silent atrial fibrillation according to results from the EMBRACE trial and reported at the International Stroke Conference in February. Only 3% of patients had atrial fibrillation on a 24-hour Holter but 16% were found to have the arrhythmia after wearing a monitor for 30 days. Click here for more.

• The graphic images that were planned for placement on all cigarette packs will not be implemented. Last year a federal judge ruled that the images violated the tobacco companies’ First Amendment rights and a 3-judge appeals court later upheld the decision 2 to 1. The FDA announced in March 2013 that they would not pursue the issue any further at this time.

Corresponding author: Zachary Mulkey, MD
Contact Information: zachary.mulkey@ttuhsc.edu