News Highlights:

- In a unique trial, doctors are trying to improve the odds of survival for trauma patients suffering from massive blood loss and cardiac arrest. The University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore has placed at least one patient into "suspended animation" by cooling the person's body temperature to around 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10° C) and replacing blood with ice cold saline solution.This "Emergency Preservation and Resuscitation" technique provides surgeons with an hour or so to operate before they must warm up the body and restart the heart. The full results of the trial should be available by the end of 2020.
https://www.newscientist.com/article/2224004-exclusive-humans-placed-in-suspended-animation-for-the-first-time/

- As part of an ongoing investigation, Kaiser Health News and Fortune Magazine looked at the problem of lax oversight of electronic health records (EHR). In 2009, the United States mandated that all medical records be converted to electronic format. Even though an oversight agency was never appointed, the project went full steam ahead, and EHRs were touted as a "high-tech magic bullet" for reforming the nation's costly health care system. In reality, the process has often been cumbersome and problematic, leading to patient safety risks.
https://khn.org/news/no-safety-switch-how-lax-oversight-of-electronic-health-records-puts-patients-at-risk/

- The new 2-dose Shingrix shingles vaccine is hit or miss with reviewers (so far) on Ask a Patient. Of the 25 reviewers so far, 12 were dissatisfied (rating it a 1 or 2) while 10 had a good experience and gave it a 4 or 5. Only three reviewers gave it a "so-so" of 3, which is "somewhat satisfied." Also worth noting is that side effects were more likely to happen after the second Shingrix shot.The CDC says two doses of the vaccine are more than 90% effective at preventing shingles.
https://www.askapatient.com/viewrating.asp?drug=581490&name=SHINGRIX+VACCINE
https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/shingles/public/shingrix/index.html

- Nearly two dozen Adelphi University students made it a full week without their cell phones as part of a college course intended to break the powerful addiction of smartphones. By the end of the week, students felt more relaxed and gone were the nerves and shakes.
https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2019/11/14/students-ditch-phone-changed-lives/

- Pregnant women taking the HIV drug efavirenz (brand name Sustiva) are two and a half times more likely to deliver babies who have microcephaly than mothers who do not take the drug, according to a study. Babies with microcephaly have brains that are smaller than expected because their brains don't develop properly.
https://www.kff.org/news-summary/nih-release-discusses-study-findings-showing-exposure-to-hiv-treatment-efavirenz-in-womb-could-increase-risk-of-microcephaly-in-children/

- Newly approved: A contact lens for kids that does more than just correct vision, it slows the progression of nearsightedness. In the U.S., myopia affects 40% of the population. The new product is MiSight by CooperVision.
https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-contact-lens-indicated-slow-progression-nearsightedness-children

- A recent study found that heart patients who received drug therapy and no stent surgery did just as well as patients who received bypass surgery or stents. Results support the notion that too many patients are having unnecessary stent surgery. The participants in the study were not experiencing a heart attack, nor did they have blockages of the left main coronary artery. Instead, the patients in the study had narrowed arteries that were discovered with exercise stress tests.
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/16/health/heart-disease-stents-bypass.html

- An anti-itch medicine called nalfurafine shows promise as a drug to combat opioid addiction. The strange thing is that nalfurafine is itself is a type of opioid.
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/11/191121163322.htm

- The FDA announced a "Class I" recall for remote controllers that go with Medtronic MiniMed Insulin pumps because of the potential for cybersecurity risks. In August of 2018, FDA issued a warning with instructions on how to protect the security of the controllers, but with this recall, they now they are warning patients not to use the remote controllers at all. A Class I recall is the most serious type, as use of the devices may cause serious injuries or death.
https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/medical-device-recalls/medtronic-recalls-remote-controllers-minimed-insulin-pumps-potential-cybersecurity-risks

- Mundipharma, a Chinese company owned by the Sackler family (also owner of U.S. company Purdue Pharma, maker of Oxycontin), promoted Oxycontin in China by saying that it is less addictive than other opioid pain relievers. While the U.S. fights to undo the damage from its opioid epidemic, pharmaceutical companies are looking for new markets for their products by ramping up their sales efforts globally, often using unethical tactics. The Associated Press has launched an investigation into this troubling development.
https://apnews.com/4122af46fdba42119ae3db30aa13537c

- Researchers discovered a brain circuit in mice that controls compulsive drinking of alcohol. They found a biomarker that may predict the likelihood of development of binge drinking behavior in the future. This research may one day help explain why some humans are more likely to become compulsive drinkers than others and lead to ways to prevent it.
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/11/191121141415.htm

- According to a study of more than 100,000 patients, long-term users of opioid pain medications trying to reduce their dosages are often tapering by a rapid amount that is even more rapid than what the CDC recommends. Rapid opioid tapering by long-term users can be hazardous.
https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2755492

- Takeda reported that its lung cancer drug Alunbrig (generic name brigatinib) reduced the risk of disease progression by 57% compared with the existing treatment crizotinib (brand name Xalkori) in a clinical trial. Alunbrig has been approved in the E.U. since 2018, and the company hopes for regulatory approval in U.S. by March 2021.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-takeda-pharma-alunbrig-idUSKBN1XX02D

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