

[IMAGE]

## Not Safe Enough?

Technology and research advancements have taken surgery to a new level as we enter the 21st century. However, the dangers associated with such invasive procedures remain a discomforting reality, a fact emphasized by a recent study that appeared in the journal *Surgery*.

Researchers examining data from 15,000 hospital discharges in Utah and Colorado in 1992 found that three percent of patients undergoing an operation or child delivery experienced an adverse event, and that 5.6% of those patients died as a result. Most distressing perhaps is some of the specific data on such events:

- € Technique-related complications accounted for nearly 25% of all adverse surgical events;
- € Drug-related errors, diagnostic errors and errors in therapy of choice accounted for 12% of these events; and
- € Fifty-four percent of these complications were considered "preventable."

Doctors always warn patients that surgical procedures carry a certain risk independent of the condition or injury being treated, but these results seem to suggest that the surgeons could be doing more to reduce the risk. If you or a loved one is considering surgery or has been advised to undergo a surgical procedure, make sure you get a second opinion and investigate nonsurgical alternatives. Your doctor of chiropractic can provide you with information on conservative care that may be as effective as (and definitely safer than) going under the knife.

### *Reference:*

Gawande AA, Thomas EJ, Zinner MJ, et al. The incidence and nature of surgical adverse events in Colorado and Utah in 1992. *Surgery* 1999; Vol. 126, No. 1, pp66-75.

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