



Tried and True Beats the New in Medical Devices, Yet Again

December 23, 2011 by *Patrick A. Malone*

If you're facing a [hip or knee replacement](#), today's story in the [New York Times](#) is a fresh reminder of something we patient safety mavens see over and over with new drugs and devices: the new ones often work no better, and sometimes worse, than older versions on the market for a long time. But it takes much longer for the safety track record to develop for the new devices, and meantime billions in profits have been pulled down.

Barry Meier of the Times is on top of this story, as he is on so many of the ongoing troubles in the medical device industry.

The new study finds that new technology in hip and knee replacements, such as metal-on-metal hip joints, don't turn out to last any longer than their older cousins. Many Americans who have had early failures of new hip replacements can attest to that.

Another interesting angle is the source of the study: an Australian patient registry. We don't have such mandatory registries in the United States. When all patients are entered into a common database, it's easier to pick up early warning signals of safety issues.

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