

Medical experts trying to level the cost of care

By Ketaki Gokhale, Bloomberg

Devi Shetty is obsessed with making heart surgery affordable for millions of Indians. On his office desk are photographs of two of his heroes: Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi.

Shetty is not a public health official motivated by charity. He's a heart surgeon turned businessman who has started a chain of 21 medical centers around India. By trimming costs with such measures as buying cheaper scrubs and spurning air-conditioning, he has cut the price of artery-clearing coronary bypass surgery to 95,000 rupees (\$1,583), half of what it was 20 years ago, and wants to get the price down to \$800 within a decade. The same procedure costs \$106,385 at Ohio's Cleveland Clinic, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

"It shows that costs can be substantially contained," said Srinath Reddy, president of the Geneva-based World Heart Federation, of Shetty's approach. "It's possible to deliver very high quality cardiac care at a relatively low cost."

Medical experts like Reddy are watching closely, eager to see if Shetty's driven cost-cutting can point the way for hospitals to boost revenue on a wider scale by making life-saving heart operations more accessible to potentially millions of people in India and other developing countries.

Read the whole story

Teen at Camp Sacramento died from allergic reaction

By Suzanne Phan, News 10

It was supposed to be the last day of a family vacation at a popular summer camp, but it ended in tragedy for one Sacramento area family when a loved one had a fatal allergic reaction.

Relatives says 13-year-old Natalie Giorgi died from a severe allergic reaction to peanut butter while she was attending Camp Sacramento off Highway 50 in El Dorado County. Now, the family says it really wants to get the message out about how dangerous and deadly food allergies can be.



Natalie Giorgi

Giorgi was very careful about what she ate and always made sure her food did not have nuts according to family and friends.

But, she had unknowingly eaten a Rice Krispies-type snack with peanut butter.

On Friday night, the final night of camp, there was entertainment and refreshments. A dessert tray was put out in a dark area of the camp. Giorgi reached for a treat and took a bite out of it. She knew something wasn't right, spit it out and told tell her mother, who also tasted the treat. They

later realized the treat contained peanut butter. Natalie felt fine for about 20 minutes, but then began vomiting, had trouble breathing and went into cardiac arrest.

Read the whole story

CPR device frees paramedics to give other care

By Kathryn Reed

It may not be a paramedic doing chest compressions when the ambulance arrives. Instead, it could be Auto-Pulse.

“It has definitely been a game changer in how we run our CPR calls,” South Lake Tahoe firefighter Scott Blasser told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Auto-Pulse will provide more consistent perfusion pressure across the board.”

It’s the size of a boogie board and is heavy, so it’s not something that would be carried by search and rescue crews.

A band is placed over the patient’s chest and the machine does compressions on the heart instead of an EMT or paramedic.



This shows a mock patient on

the Auto-Pulse board with
the compression strap on.
Photo/Provided

The devices are on South Tahoe and Lake Valley fire departments' three primary ambulances. They were bought earlier this year at a cost of about \$15,000 each.

It's something that can be used on most any cardiac call. The limitations of the machine are based on the size of the person – if they are too small or too large.

When a man who nearly drowned earlier this month in one of the canals in the Tahoe Keys was pulled from the water crews used the Auto-Pulse to help revive him.

South Tahoe Fire Chief Bruce Martin has been aware of the devices for about a decade and said they made a world of difference when he worked in Fremont.

"Now we have a machine that takes the place of human labor. It does it consistently and it doesn't get tired," Martin told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We think it contributes to the successful outcome in cardiac care."

Blasser explained that the evolution of cardiopulmonary resuscitation is that compressions are more important than breaths. And that consistency and depth of the compressions is critical to the recovery of the patient. This machine and others like it can provide pressure and consistency better than a person.

This in turn allows the paramedic to be doing other things like administering drugs, working on wounds, starting an IV, intubation and other vital medical care.

It would also usually take two people to perform CPR because one person can only go so long, so they trade off.

“Given the circumstances we encounter, people have done CPR for an hour,” Martin said.

And if a battery runs out on the Auto-Pulse, manual labor is still possible.

Blasser said another good thing about Auto-Pulse is that is able to keep doing the compressions when the crews are lifting the patient onto a gurney or if they have to be turned.

So far, the Auto-Pulses is being used about a handful of times a month.

“It improves the quality of job we can do,” Blasser said.

Calif. roller coaster rules stringent



Six Flags in Vallejo.
Photo/LTN file

By Sophie Kissinger, Huffington Post

Last week, a woman died and nearly a dozen were injured on a roller coaster at Six Flag Over Texas. With all the amusement

parks and roller coasters in California, the tragedy made us ask: Could this happen in California?

To great relief, we found that California has more safeguards in place. Texas is one of at least 17 states that have no state or federal agency responsible for enforcing the safety of amusement parks, according to NBC.

California law insists that certified safety inspectors annually perform unannounced inspections of all rides' operation, physical state and records, according to the Permanent Amusement Ride Safety Inspection Program, which was put into place by a California law passed in 2000.

Read the whole story

Teen at Camp Sacramento dies for unknown reasons

Attempts to resuscitate a 13-year-old girl who had stopped breathing at Camp Sacramento were unsuccessful.

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies were called to the area along Highway 50 in the American River canyon about 10:40pm on July 26.

The girl was taken by ambulance to Barton Memorial Hospital where she was pronounced dead at 12:30 this morning.

The cause of death is pending an autopsy. The family has requested the name of the of the teen not be released.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Number of prisoners declining in U.S.

By Erica Goode, New York Times

The prison population in the United States dropped in 2012 for the third consecutive year, according to federal statistics released on Thursday, in what criminal justice experts said was the biggest decline in the nation's recent history, signaling a shift away from an almost four-decade policy of mass imprisonment.

The number of inmates in state and federal prisons decreased by 1.7 percent, to an estimated 1,571,013 in 2012 from 1,598,783 in 2011, according to figures released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, an arm of the Justice Department. Although the percentage decline appeared small, the fact that it followed decreases in 2011 and 2010 offers persuasive evidence of what some experts say is a "sea change" in America's approach to criminal punishment.

About half the 2012 decline – 15,035 prisoners – occurred in California, which has decreased its prison population in response to a Supreme Court order to relieve prison overcrowding. But eight other states, including New York, Florida, Virginia and North Carolina, showed substantial decreases, of more than 1,000 inmates, and more than half the states reported some drop in the number of prisoners. (Figures for three states were estimated because they had not submitted data in time for the report.) The population of federal prisons increased slightly, but at a slower rate than in previous years, the report found.

Read the whole story

Southwest Gas wants to raise El Dorado County rates

Southwest Gas wants to raise rates effective Jan. 1.

A residential customer in South Lake Tahoe using 73 therms a month now pays \$66.20. A rate increase would put that monthly bill at \$73.41.

The California Public Utilities Commission is having evidentiary hearings from Aug. 12-16 at 10am in San Francisco.

Southwest Gas in December applied for the rate increase to up its operating margin for natural gas service in El Dorado County. The company wants to make \$2.8 million more or 13.6 percent.

Southwest says the increase is to “recover the reasonable costs the company will incur to own and operate the facilities used to maintain and provide safe and reliable natural gas service to its California customers.”

For more info, email public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov or call (415) 703.2074.

Nev. mental hospital not

appealing accreditation loss

By Phillip Reese and Cynthia Hubert, Sacramento Bee

A Nevada state psychiatric hospital under fire for busing hundreds of mentally ill patients to cities across the nation over the past five years will not appeal a decision stripping it of its accreditation.

A committee of the Joint Commission, an independent agency that accredits hospitals nationwide, last week issued a preliminary denial of accreditation for Rawson-Neal Psychiatric Hospital in Las Vegas, citing multiple violations of quality care standards, many related to patient safety.

The hospital had the option to appeal, and keep its accreditation during the process, but officials announced late Thursday they would waive that right and that the hospital and affiliated programs would lose accreditation as of today.

Read the whole story

Sex offender trying to interact with kids in S. Tahoe



Police are warning people about sex offender Wesley Goetz. Photos/Provided

Updated July 27 6:45am:

South Lake Tahoe police are recanting some of the information released about registered sex offender Wesley Goetz.

Goetz is on lifetime supervision, but he is not on active parole in Nevada. He is permitted to travel into California.

Police say Goetz's desire to obtain a business license in South Lake Tahoe do not amount a parole violation or any other criminal violation.

Goetz must still adhere to several special conditions including staying away from areas or businesses which children frequent, and not accessing the Internet without permission.

Goetz is not wanted by law enforcement officials. Goetz is currently in compliance the terms of his supervision.

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A registered sex offender from Nevada has been trying to start a business in South Lake Tahoe that involves children.

Wesley Goetz, 55, lives in Incline Village is a Tier II sex offender out of Nevada. He was convicted in 1998 for felony lewdness with a child under 14, and is on lifetime supervision for his crimes.

Coming into the city limits is a violation of his parole.

South Lake Tahoe officials said Goetz applied – and was denied – a license for an Internet-based business. He also tried to obtain a business license to be a photographer at children's birthday parties, a handyman and a traveling salesman. He was also denied licenses for those businesses.

Part of Goetz's parole conditions is that he must stay away from areas and businesses which children frequent, and not access the Internet without permission.

South Lake Tahoe police detectives say Goetz has falsely claimed that he has permission to be near children, and that he has permission to leave Nevada. Authorities say he has also lied to El Dorado and Placer counties deputies.

Goetz has a valid Nevada driver's license and two vehicles registered in his name; a 1991 Ford Aerostar van bearing NV/805WXX and a 1995 Honda motorcycle bearing NV/177782.

Anyone seeing Goetz near children or in California should call authorities. He is a white male, brown hair, blue eyes, 5-feet-4-inches, and 140 pounds.

Officers have provided the following information:

- Registered sex offenders in California are listed online.
- Registered sex offenders in Nevada are online.
- The offender registry includes only people who have been required by law to register and who are in compliance with the offender registration laws.
- The information contained in the registry is provided as a public service and may not be current or accurate.
- Persons should not rely solely on the offender registry as a safeguard against offenses in their communities.

- The crime for which a person is convicted may not accurately reflect the level of risk.
- Anyone who uses information contained in the registry to harass registrants or commit any crime may be subject to criminal prosecution.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Federal loans not available for LTCC students

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College is one of 17 community colleges not offering federal loans.

“We try to encourage students to not get involved with student loans while in community college. Our tuition fees are very low cost, and if a student is financially needy, they almost always can get their fees waived through the Board of Governors fee waiver,” LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Our philosophy is to ensure our students transfer to four-year colleges as debt-free as possible.”

It costs about \$1,200 a year in tuition fees for a full-time student at a California community college. This is the least expensive in the country.

One reason the two-year institutions are not offering federal loans is because in 2014 if a school has a default rate of more than 30 percent for three consecutive years, the federal government could issue sanctions.

"I don't believe a California community college campus has ever been sanctioned," said Debbie Cochrane, research director for the Institute for College Access & Success, told the *Modesto Bee*. "To be sanctioned, you have to have high (default) rates with no mitigating circumstances."

Community college students also have access to Pell grants. That money can be used for books and living expenses. There are scholarships and other financial aid available, too.

Murillo added, "With the recent national concerns for the high level of student debt, this seems to be a prudent course of action for most students."