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Exploring Surgeon Burnout: Its Causes and How It Affects the Quality and Safety of Patient Care

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Background:

Poor well-being may affect the performance of all types of workers. Surgeons, in particular, are inclined to suffer from burnout. However, a lack of definitive research on the link between burnout and patient care exists. Understanding this could help identify the outcomes of surgeon burnout and underline the need for interventions.

Objective:

The present study aimed to inform the design of a broader project investigating burnout in surgeons.

Methods:

A paper survey with 6 questions was developed after the review of the literature. The survey was conducted between January to March 2019 to design and develop an interview schedule and identify whether stress and burnout are issues in Yorkshire surgeons.

Results:

Eighty-three surgeons from different specialities, including urology, general surgery, trauma and orthopaedic surgery and neurosurgery, completed the survey. Of these 44% were consultants and 56 % were trainees.

Ninety-two percent of participants believed that stress and burnout are issues for surgeons within the NHS.

The results of the survey were used to develop a semi-structured interview study, which will include 15 to 20 surgeons from different specialities.

The interview study will explore reasons for surgeon burnout and identify a mechanism to support surgeons in the workplace to prevent or reduce burnout.

The research may also be used to improve patient safety and quality of care.

Conclusions:

Surgeons are more likely to experience a high level of burnout. Further study is needed to explore factors responsible for the burnout and methods to help surgeons to manage it effectively.

Conflict of Interests/Comments: Nothing to declare.