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**Pressures on surgical residents to ‘measure up’ in surgery and their effects on decision-making**

**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:**

The surgical training process involves adopting a specific professional identity, in which everyday practices validate certain attitudes, perceptions and behaviours over others. Performing the role of surgeon brings with it pressures to manifest confidence, certainty, and quickness, despite feeling uncertain. However, our understanding of how these pressures impact individual action and decision-making is limited. We present this study to explore surgical trainees’ perceptions and experiences of managing their image during moments of decision-making and uncertainty.

**Methods:**

We conducted 11 semi-structured, 60-minute interviews with surgical residents. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, we asked the trainees to reflect on social pressures in surgery and their impact on decision-making. Data was collected and analyzed using an iterative design.

**Results:**

Our preliminary analysis suggests that trainees build and manage their image for themselves (i.e. self-efficacy), their patients (i.e. maintain trust), and their colleagues (i.e. reputation, respect, support). Residents discussed their reluctance to call for help or question hierarchy when uncertain, fearing that they may appear less competent given that there is an expectation to ‘know’. Since residency is predominantly focused on learning and assessment, we believe that the effect of managing image has implications in the development of competency.

**Conclusions:**

This study will deepen our understanding of how social pressures in the surgical culture may impact individual decision-making. Eventual translation of this research could include formal instruction of these concepts in the training curriculum, allowing residents to appropriately recognize, reflect and cope with these pressures.