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No. 8. Why almost any orthopaedic subspecialty is preferable to spine surgery

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Background:

Resident's choice of subspecialty is influenced by many factors. Spine surgeons are in demand in most European countries (Okafor et al.). However, spine surgery ranks low among the subspecialty choices (Sanaz et al.). The reasons for this are mostly unknown.

Methods:

Participants in the mandatory 3-day spine surgery course for orthopaedic residents 2018 were asked to complete a survey regarding career priorities and choice of subspecialty. They were asked to give a reason for not choosing spine surgery.

Results:

37 current residents participated in the survey. 10 women. Only 1 out of the 37 wanted to pursue a career in spine surgery (3 %). Most residents opted for arthroplasty 9/37 (24 %), hand 8/37 (22 %), traumatology 8/37 (22 %), and sports 5/37 (14 %). A high proportion of outpatient surgery was given as the main reason for the choice of subspecialty by 15/37 (41 %) of participants, geographic location in 12/37 (32 %) and minimal on call duties in 9/37 (24 %). The reason for not choosing spine surgery was stated as prolonged duration of surgery 16/37 (43 %) and the belief that many patients suffers from psychosomatic diseases 12/37 (32 %).

Conclusion:

If only 2-3 percent of orthopedic residents choose spine surgery as their subspecialty it is questionable if status quo can be maintained or any expansion in numbers can be achieved. The reasons for not choosing spine surgery as a subspecialty is based on the false belief that all spine surgeries are long lasting and that our indications for surgery likewise are wrong resulting in many patients with psychosomatic diseases undergoing surgery. We should do our utmost to correct these misunderstandings.