
Disruptive Docs and Bad Surgical Outcomes



A Vanderbilt-led study published in JAMA Surgery indicates that surgeons who are rude and disrespectful to patients are more likely to make mistakes in the operating room. Researchers found that patients treated by misbehaving doctors had 14 percent more complications in the 30 days after their surgeries than patients who were treated by surgeons who had better bedside manners.

See Also: [Patients' Rude Behaviour Linked to Poor Care](#)

The results also show that disruptive doctors also impact the ability of other surgical team members to do their work.

The study looked at 2011-2013 data from seven medical centres that participated in the National Surgical Quality Improvement Program. The data involved approximately 32,000 adult patients and 800 surgeons. The outcome data were correlated with patient and family reports of disrespectful and rude surgeon behaviour as documented by the hospitals' Offices of Patient Relations for a period of two years prior to the targeted surgical procedures.

Complications reported by patients receiving care from surgeons perceived as disrespectful included surgical site infections, pneumonia, renal conditions, stroke, sepsis and urinary tract infections.

"Even though there was only a 14 percent difference in adverse outcomes between patients cared for by the most respectful and least respectful surgeons, if you take those numbers and distribute them across the United States where 27 million surgical procedures are performed each year, that could represent more than 350,000 surgical site infections, urinary tract infections, sepsis — all kinds of things that we know can be avoided when surgical teams work well together," said Gerald Hickson, MD, senior vice president for Quality, Safety and Risk Prevention at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC). He estimated the cost of these excess surgical complications to be as much as \$3 billion annually.

The study's findings highlighted the importance of healthcare leaders listening to and documenting patient stories in real time. Those who do can identify at-risk physicians and intervene to promote safety and reduce risk.

According to researchers, 80 percent of the 1,600 physicians and surgeons who received interventions through VUMC's Patient Advocacy Reporting System responded favourably. As a result, the doctors experienced fewer patient complaints about disrespectful behaviour and fewer malpractice claims.

"Our findings reinforce the importance of giving professionals who are associated with a disproportionate share of patient complaints the opportunity to see themselves in the mirror, the way other team members see them," said lead author William Cooper, MD, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Paediatrics and director of the Vanderbilt Center for Patient and Professional Advocacy. "Most develop insight and self-regulate. Physicians are lifelong learners and respond if their medical colleagues have the courage to provide feedback in an organised, stepwise approach."

Source: [Fierce Healthcare](#)

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