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Addicted to life in the operating room

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Dear Editor,

After reading Zaid and Diab's reviews on surgeon suicide, we agree with the author's observation and analysis of the high suicide rate of surgeons (1). Here we would like to add another possible risk factor not mentioned, addiction to the high-pressure life and corresponding "post-surgical stress disorder".

The daily working environment of surgeons is full of huge pressure, but correspondingly, they can also obtain a great sense of accomplishment and self-worth realization from work: save the lives of most seriously ill patients, overcome technical problems, and closely cooperate with the medical team, all these scenarios will lead high dopamine levels in addition to high adrenaline levels. In contrast, daily life appears calm and monotonous. Therefore, the operating room is a war zone, surgeons may experience the same stress disorder as war journalists and veterans. Some of them become addicted to this highly stressful life and are inclined to maintain hormone levels and excitement to life by substance abuse resistance when the stressor is eliminated. Obviously, similar to the abstinence reaction of substance abuse, depression state sustained until the next new stimulus comes. The psychological problems caused by this life circle may increase the risk of suicide. Therefore, we agree with the author and advocate that surgeons should be covered by more comprehensive mental health care, adjust the state of mind in time and get psychological intervention in advance of a serious condition.

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References

[1] Zaid M, Diab M. Surgeon suicide remains a critical issue for the orthopaedic profession. JBJS 2021;10.2106.

Conflict of Interest: None Declared