

Burnout and medical errors among American surgeons.

June 28, 2010

Shanafelt TD, Balch CM, Bechamps G, et al. Burnout and medical errors among American surgeons. *Ann Surg.* 2010;251(6):995-1000. doi:10.1097/SLA.0b013e3181bfdab3.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/burnout-and-medical-errors-among-american-surgeons>

Duty-hour restrictions for resident physicians are intended to improve safety, but research in [residents](#), [nurses](#), and [primary care physicians](#) indicates that burnout and depression may be stronger predictors of substandard care than the number of hours worked. This survey of practicing surgeons revealed that 1 in 11 had committed a serious medical error within the past 3 months, and those who had committed an error were much more likely to meet criteria for burnout or depression. As in [prior studies](#) of surgeons, work hours were not correlated with likelihood of reporting an error, or being depressed. Although this survey could not determine if surgeons experienced emotional problems because of having committed an error or vice versa, it is well known that clinicians who commit errors experience substantial emotional distress, as discussed in an AHRQ WebM&M [commentary](#).