Radiating Doubt: Navigating Impostor Syndrome in Interventional Radiology Residency

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BACKGROUND

What is impostor syndrome (IS)?

- Psychological phenomenon characterized by:
  - feelings of self-doubt and incompetence among high-achieving individuals
  - internalized beliefs of not being as competent, skillful, or intellectual as others perceive one to be

Why does IS matter, in general and in medicine?

- IS causes significant distress across various disciplines
- Medical trainees experience elevated levels of IS
- IS can negatively affect confidence, academic performance, mental health, program retention rates, well-being, job satisfaction, and job performance

OBJECTIVE

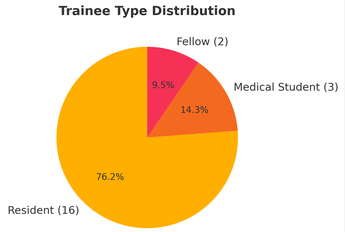
- To explore the prevalence of impostor syndrome among interventional radiology (IR) residents and students
- Provide resources and solutions for those struggling with IS

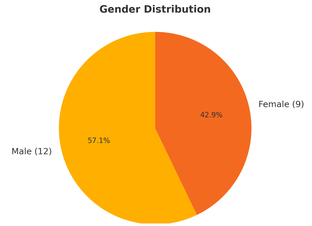
METHODS

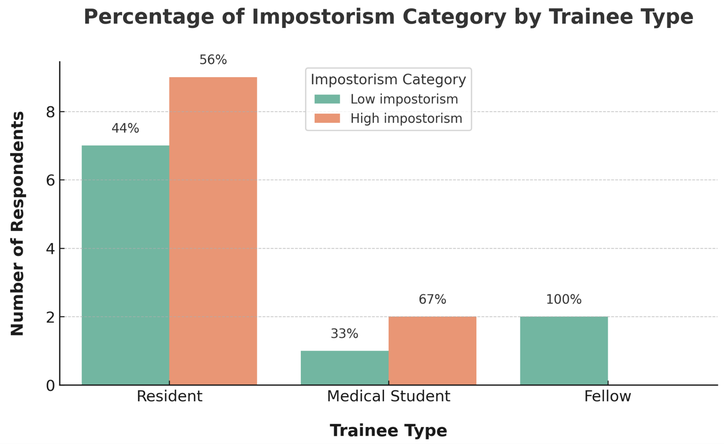
- Anonymous six-question survey developed based on Leary et al. 2000
  1. Sometimes I am afraid I will be discovered for who I really am.
  2. I tend to feel like a phony.
  3. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am.
  4. In some situations I feel like an imposter.
  5. Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.
  6. In some situations I feel like a "great pretender"; that is, I'm not as genuine as others think I am.
- Each question had likert-scale response options, (with score):
  - Not at all characteristic of me (1)
  - Slightly characteristic of me (2)
  - Moderately characteristic of me (3)
  - Very characteristic of me (4)
  - Extremely characteristic of me (5)
- Two additional questions:
  - Which type of trainee are you?
  - What is your gender?

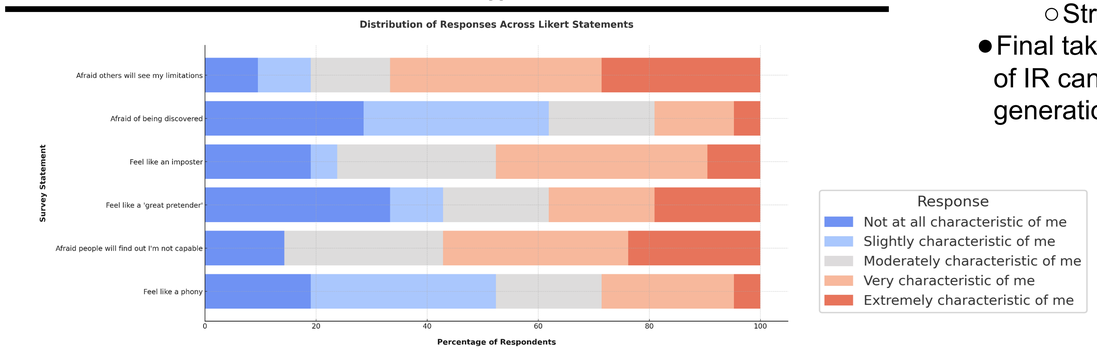
RESULTS

- 21 respondents
- Median score = 20
  - "Low impostorism" = scores <20; "high impostorism" = scores ≥20
- 11/21 respondents (52.4%) had high impostorism









DISCUSSION

- Our survey found a median impostorism score of 20 among IR trainees
- Over half of respondents scored in the high impostorism category
- Results align with existing literature showing medical trainees' increased vulnerability to IS
- High IS may be linked to:
  - Pressure for early technical proficiency
  - High academic expectations
  - Gender-related disparities
- Strengths
  - Focus on an understudied group
  - Use of a validated scale
- Limitations
  - Small sample size
  - Modification of scale (median score cutoff)
  - Response bias
  - Survey distribution through one forum limits sample's representation of all IR trainees

CONCLUSIONS

- IS is a significant concern among IR trainees
- IR residency programs should consider continuing and increasing integration of:
  - Mental health resources (online group coaching, interactive workshops, cognitive behavioral therapy [CBT] resources)
  - Normalization conversations (seminars acknowledging IS and strategies to combat it)
  - Structured mentorship
- Final takeaway: by proactively addressing impostorism, the field of IR can foster a more resilient, confident, and supportive next generation of practitioners

REFERENCES