



Unspoken Second Victim Syndrome in Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery: A Systematic Review

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OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to perform an evidence-based review regarding Second Victim Syndrome among Otolaryngology, Head and Neck surgeons.

METHODS

Thorough literature review was performed and all eligible abstracts and articles were reviewed with inclusion criteria. Study demographics, results, and article topics were compiled.

INTRODUCTION

Medical errors and adverse events affect patients but they may have profound psychological and emotional impact on healthcare providers, a phenomenon known as “Second Victim Syndrome” (SVS). The emotions felt in regards to an error or adverse event can be life-altering with long term ramifications. It is suspected the Otolaryngologists can experience SVS, but is has not been reviewed what has been published regarding its impact on Otolaryngologist.

RESULTS

There were 6 studies that met inclusion criteria. There were no prior systematic reviews or meta-analysis. Only one editorial article utilized the term Second Victim Syndrome to discuss the emotional impact on Otolaryngologists after errors and adverse events. Three articles were survey studies that collected emotional reactions but it was not their primary objective. All included articles did not provide a standardized way or suggestions to help support those suffering from SVS.

Table 1. Summary of articles

Author, Year (Country)	No. of participants	Study design	Participant type	Stated Aim
Lander et al., 2006 (United States)	210	Cross-sectional study	Otolaryngology surgeons	Emotional responses to errors and corrective actions
McLaren et al., 2021, (United Kingdom)	36	Cross-sectional study	Otolaryngology trainees	Effects of complications and medical errors on trainees
Fournier et al., 2018 (Canada)	613	Cross-sectional study	Otolaryngology surgeons under 45 years old	Work related stressors and coping strategies
Fishman/Fisher, 2021 (England)	N/A	Editorial	Otolaryngology surgeons	Emotional burden when things go wrong
Sotaloff, 2019 (United States)	N/A	Editorial	Otolaryngology trainees	Effects of iAEs* on the physician
Hamaker, 2023 (United States)	2	Editorial / Interview	Otolaryngology surgeons	Discuss Second Victim Syndrome

* Intraoperative Adverse Events

CONCLUSION

SVS is a significant yet underexplored challenge within Otolaryngology, representing emotional, psychological, and professional ramifications for surgeons following adverse events. This systematic review provides an initial overview of the experience and support systems within the specialty, suggesting that further targeted research is crucial to better understand SVS's prevalence, impact across career stages, and support systems that can be implemented to support those experiencing difficult emotions to encourage career longevity and resiliency.

Figure 1. Second Victim Syndrome in Otolaryngology – PRISMA Flow Diagram

