



Burnout syndrome among Surgeons

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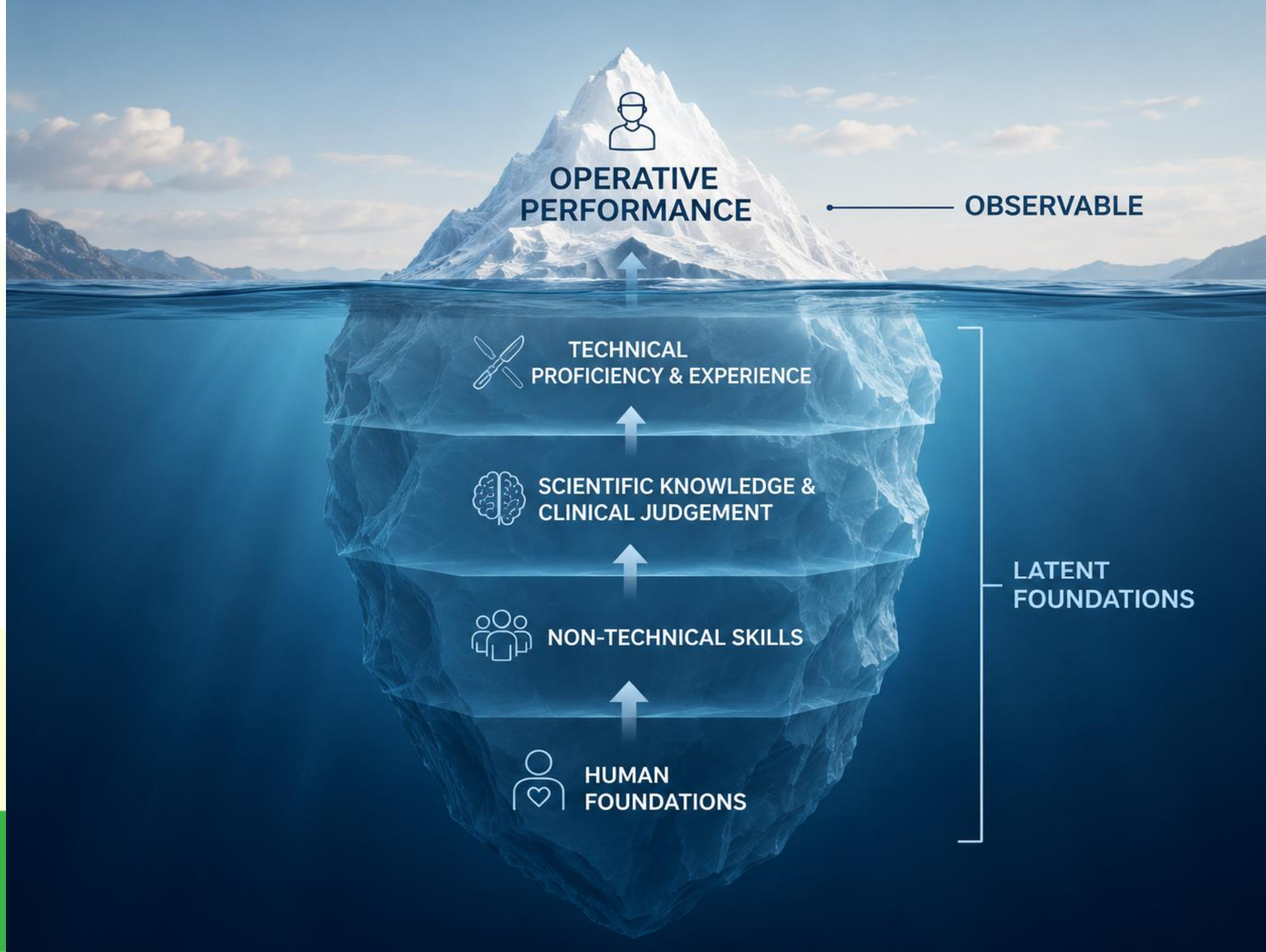


No Conflict of interests





Contemplation before surgery
Joe Wilder





Definition of **burnout**

**Emotional
exhaustion**

Depersonalization

**Reduced sense of
accomplishment**



Maslach 1981. J. Organiz. Behav., 2: 99-113.

World Health Organization. Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon." ICD-11, May 2019



1



PROLONGED TRAINING
+ DELAYED GRATIFICATION



2



COMPETING TASKS
DEMANDING IMMEDIATE
ATTENTION



3



UNPREDICTABLE WORKLOAD



4

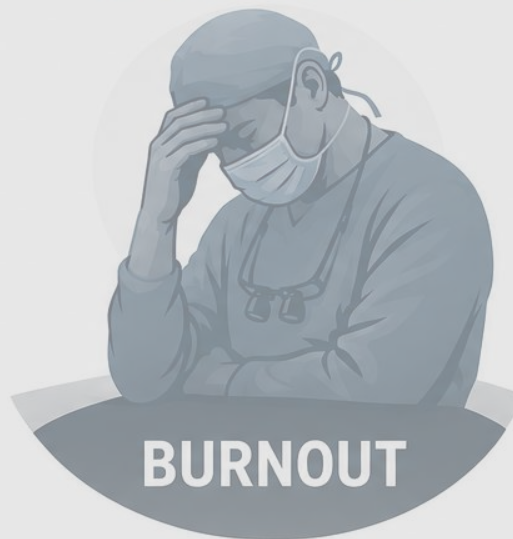


HIGH-STAKES,
IRREVERSIBLE DECISIONS



6

WHY SURGEONS ARE ESPECIALLY
EXPOSED TO BURNOUT



BURNOUT

5



CULTURE OF STOICISM /
PERFECTIONISM



SURGEON BURNOUT IMPACT TRIAD



Shanafelt et al. Burnout and Medical Errors Among American Surgeons. *Annals of Surgery*. 2010;251(6):995-1000.

Al-Ghunaim et al. Surgeon burnout, impact on patient safety and professionalism. *The American Journal of Surgery*. 2022;224(1):228-238.



Prevalence of Surgeon Burnout

- **40% of US surgeons meet burnout criteria (ACS survey, n=7,905)**
- **41% unchanged 25 years later (meta-analysis, 103 studies, n=63,587)**
- **46% trainees vs 36% attendings**
- **Highest risk: trauma surgery/Lowest risk: pediatric surgery**
- **Private practice > academic practice**
- **Significant increase during Covid pandemic (Shalaby survey n=954)**

Shanafelt et al. Annals of Surgery. 2009;250(3):463-471

Etheridge et al. Journal of the American College of Surgeons. 2023;236(1):253-265

Shalaby et al. BMC Psychol 12, 48 (2024)



Recognizing Burnout

Exhaustion: persistent fatigue, dread, irritability, sleep disruption

Cynicism: dehumanizing language, withdrawal, reduced empathy

Reduced accomplishment: self-doubt, rumination, avoiding complex cases

Behavioral flags: absenteeism, substance use, uncharacteristic conflict
Screening:

Coping with burnout at Individual level

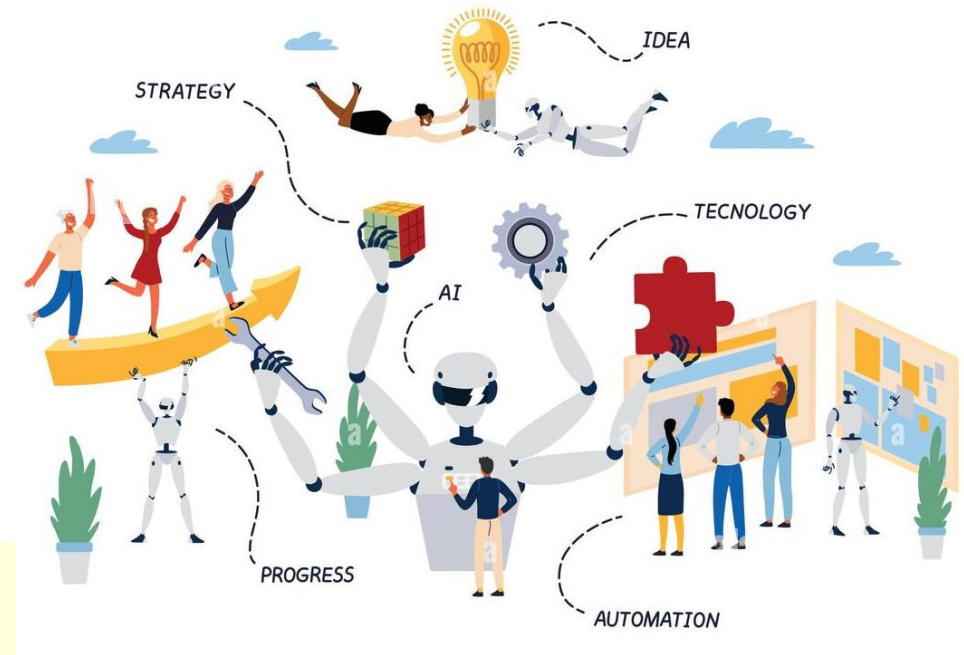


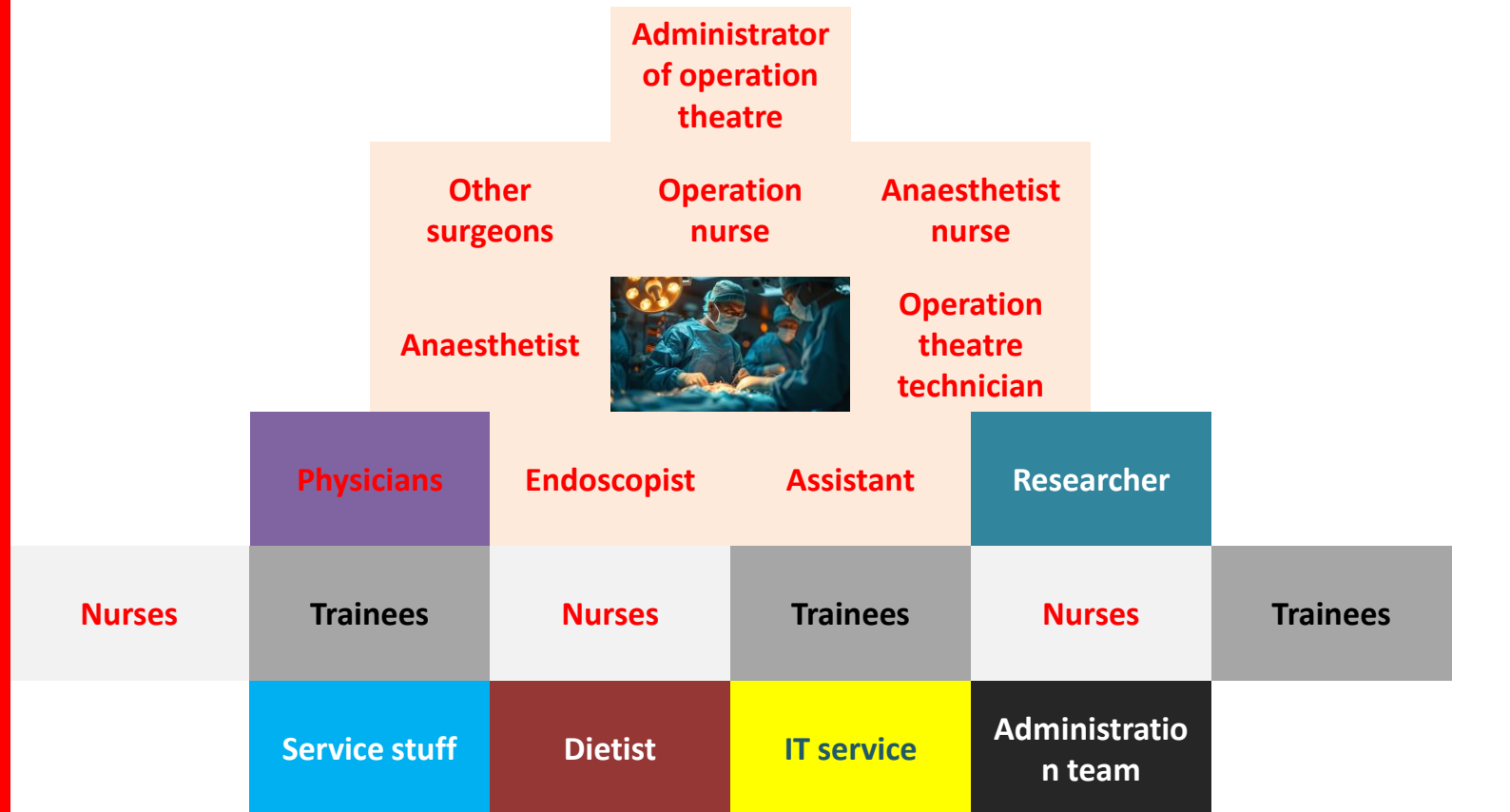
وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ
صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ
فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ
السَّاجِدِينَ
وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَكَ
الْيَقِينُ



How can **operational research** science be used in organisation of surgical Care?

Workflow Automation





Leader

A Resident's Story



Drive to prove himself: answered every call immediately, ran between competing tasks
Left jobs half-finished to respond to the next urgent request
Answered phone calls mid-trauma-resuscitation
Quality declined → increased criticism from colleagues
Reframed criticism as persecution ("colleagues are against him")
Resigned



A consultant's Story



Conflict with a colleague who had influence with department leadership
Placed under increased scrutiny: his work "put under the microscope"
Simultaneously: increasing on-call/duty burden (nights and weekends)
Home front: wife carrying disproportionate family/childcare load, growing resentment
Work stress → anger and frustration carried home
Drove himself harder to "prove" resilience rather than seek support
Department offered no protected break
Outcome: resigned + major rupture in his marriage



"Svendborg case" (*Svendborgsagen*)



2013-2018





Take-Home **Messages**

- **Burnout** is common affecting about 40% of surgeons
- **Burnout** is systems issue, not a character flaw
- **Burnout** costs more than the surgeon (the patient, the system and the society)



