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# Impostor phenomenon in anaesthesiologists: a pilot study

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**Background:** Impostor phenomenon (IP) was coined in 1978 to describe an intense, pervasive feeling of intellectual fraud found in successful, high achieving women. It has since been studied in medical students and junior doctors but to date no investigations include anaesthetists therefore this study provides novel, unique insights.

**Methods:** This single centre, convenience sample, pilot survey was performed in an Irish Anaesthesia Department. Consultants and trainees completed a voluntary, anonymous questionnaire including a validated tool—Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS). The objective was to investigate if IP is present in anaesthesiologists and if so, how prevalent it is. The secondary aim focused on if IP has correlation with gender or training years.

**Results:** Surveys were distributed to 54 department members. Basic descriptive statistics was used on 24 completed questionnaires (44.4% response rate). Of those respondents 58% were male and 42% female. The overall CIPS score median was 62.5 (64 in females *vs.* 62.5 in males) (58.5 in senior faculty members *vs.* 70.5 in juniors). In this sample, 50% of participants meet the clinical definition of IP scoring  $\geq 62$  with 95.8% experiencing moderate, frequent or intense impostorism.

**Conclusions:** This is the first study indicating IP is prevalent in anaesthesiologists. It highlights the need to ameliorate IP particularly in junior and female trainees.

A larger scale study is underway to statistically validate our preliminary findings allowing us to comment on effect size, confidence intervals and power. This research obtains information on a previously overlooked factor in clinical education, academic careers and wellbeing of anaesthesiologists.

**Keywords:** Anaesthesiologists; impostor phenomenon (IP); impostor syndrome; women; gender equality; junior doctors; trainees

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### Footnote

*Conflicts of Interest:* The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

*Ethical Statement:* The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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