Evidence supports premise: OR distractions up surgical errors

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(HealthDay)—Typical operating room distractions and interruptions (ORDIs) potentially increase the likelihood of surgical errors among surgical trainees, according to a study published in the November issue of the *Archives of Surgery*.

Robin L. Feuerbacher, Ph.D., from Oregon State University in Corvallis, and colleagues assessed whether realistic ORDIs induce errors in a simulated surgical procedure performed by 18 second-year, third-year, and research-year surgical residents. During the critical stages of a simulated laparoscopic cholecystectomy, four distractions and two interruptions were simulated, based on nine months of observations. The participants were assigned a prospective memory task prior to the simulated procedure.

The researchers found that major surgical errors were committed in 44 percent of simulated procedures with ORDIs (all of which occurred after 1 p.m.) and 6 percent of procedures without ORDIs ($P = 0.02$), with the most errors caused by interrupting questions, followed by sidebar conversations. Fifty-six percent of those with ORDIs forgot the prospective memory task, compared with 22 percent of those without ORDIs ($P = 0.04$).

"This study provided statistically significant evidence to support the hypothesis that realistic ORDIs increase the likelihood of errors in a simulated laboratory setting with novice surgeons," the authors write.

More information: Abstract
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