

Defensive neurosurgery up in states with high liability risk

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(HealthDay)—Neurosurgeons are more likely to practice defensive medicine in states with high state-level liability risk, according to a study published in the February issue of *Neurosurgery*.

Timothy R. Smith, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., from Northwestern University in Chicago, and colleagues examined the correlation of [defensive medicine](#) with the liability environment. Data were collected from 1,026 neurosurgeons' responses to a 51-question online survey. The survey, which had previously been validated, included questions related to neurosurgeon, practice, and patient characteristics; perceptions of the liability environment; and defensive medicine behaviors.

The researchers found that 83 percent of respondents correctly identified that they were practicing in a high-risk environment, indicating that neurosurgeons' perceptions of their state's liability environment generally corresponded to objective measures of state-level liability risk. Neurosurgeons were 50 percent more likely to practice defensive medicine in high-risk states versus low-risk states, after adjustment for surgeon experience, income, high-risk patient load, liability history, and type of patient insurance.

"Both avoidance and assurance behaviors are prevalent among U.S. [neurosurgeons](#) and are correlated with subjective and objective measures of state-level [liability risk](#)," the authors write. "Defensive medicine practices do not align with patient-centered care and may contribute to increased inefficiency in an already taxed health care system."

More information:

[http://journals.lww.com/neurosurgery/Fulltext/2015/02000/Defensive Medicine in Neurosurgery Does.10.aspx" target="_new">Full Text](http://journals.lww.com/neurosurgery/Fulltext/2015/02000/Defensive_Medicine_in_Neurosurgery_Does.10.aspx)

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