

Why Do Early Career Adult Reconstruction Surgeons Change Jobs? A Survey Study

Elizabeth Lieberman, Matan Ozery, Jenna Alysse Bernstein, Jesse Isaac Wolfstadt¹, David C Landy, Claudia Leonardi, Anna Cohen-Rosenblum

¹University of Toronto

INTRODUCTION:

There are high rates of burnout and job turnover among orthopaedic surgeons. Prior studies have found up to 50% of early-career orthopaedic surgeons change jobs within 5 years of starting practice. Early career surgeons, women, and under-represented minority orthopaedic surgeons may be at higher risk for termination or job change. This turnover can lead to disrupted patient care, interrupted referral patterns, and revenue loss for providers and practices. The purpose of this study was to investigate the prevalence of job change among early-career orthopaedic adult reconstruction surgeons. The secondary aims were to examine if there are practice factors or surgeon factors such as race, gender, or burnout that may influence job change as well as to investigate reasons for changing practice.

METHODS:

An electronic survey was distributed to all 389 practicing surgeon members of the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS) Young Arthroplasty Group. The survey included questions about practice type, job change, demographics, and a validated burnout questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Survey responses were collected using a secure database. Statistical analysis was performed to examine relationships between respondent characteristics and job change.

RESULTS:

There were 201/389 responses (51.9%). Respondents were most often within the first 5 years of practice and identified as white (77%) and male (91%). (Table 1) The most common practice setting was private practice in an orthopaedic-only group (38%) followed by academic (30%) and hospital employed (19%). Forty-four of 201 respondents (22%) reported changing jobs in the past 5 years and 45 respondents (29%) reported considering changing jobs within the next five years. Of those who changed jobs, 24/44 (55%) changed within 2 years, 9/44 (21%) between 2-3 years, and 9/44 between 3-7 years of fellowship completion. Nearly half (21/44, 48%) of surgeons who changed jobs moved to a different practice setting and were more likely to leave academic (16/44, 36%), private practice (13/44, 30%), or hospital employed (7/44, 16%) jobs. Twenty-three of 44 (52%) surgeons who changed jobs moved to a different city, state, or country. The most common motivators for job change were better workplace culture (28/44, 64%), opportunities for career growth (23/44, 52%), and better alignment with values of department/institution (20/44, 45%). There were few women or underrepresented minority respondents, however there were trends toward higher rates of job change in women (5/15, 36%) and black surgeons (2/8, 25%) compared to men (39/183, 21%) and white surgeons (35/154, 23%). Respondents who were considering changing jobs but had not yet done so were significantly more likely to report symptoms of burnout compared with those who had not changed jobs or those who had changed jobs. (Table 2)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

In this survey of early-career adult reconstruction surgeons we found 5-year job change rate of 22% with an additional 29% of respondents who are considering changing jobs within the next 5 years. Surgeons changing jobs cited social factors such as workplace culture and department/institution values as reasons for changing. There may be an association between race or gender and job change in early career surgeons, however there were few underrepresented minority respondents. Surgeons reported the highest rate of burnout symptoms if they were considering job change but improved in those who changed jobs. It is important to identify factors that may lead to job change and burnout so we can better guide young surgeons in job selection and retention.

Table 1: Survey respondents' characteristics (N = 201)

Question	n(%)
What is your gender?	
Male	91.0 (45)
Female	7.0 (3)
Other	8.5 (4)
I prefer not to answer	1.5 (1)
What is your age?	
< 35	21.9 (11)
35 - 40	62.7 (31)
41 - 45	12.9 (6)
46 - 50	1.5 (1)
> 50	0.0 (0)
What is your race/ethnicity?	
Asian	8.0 (4)
Black or African American	4.0 (2)
White	76.0 (38)
Multiracial	3.4 (2)
Hispanic or Latino	2.0 (1)
I prefer not to answer	5.0 (3)
How many years in practice are you?	
< 5	41.8 (21)
5 - 10	23.3 (12)
11 - 15	20.9 (10)
> 15	0.0 (0)
What is your primary surgical subspecialty?	
Adult reconstruction*	97.0 (49)
Orthopaedic oncology	1.5 (1)
Generalist	1.0 (1)
Sports	8.5 (4)
Completed adult reconstruction Fellowship	98.0 (49)
Current practice setting	
Private practice	45.8 (23)
Academic†	28.3 (14)
Hospital employed‡	18.9 (9)
Military practice	2.0 (1)
Other	2.0 (1)

*Hip and knee replacement. †Salary from academic institution. ‡Salary from hospital or medical center.

Table 2: MBI subscales (mean ± SEM) by job plan (N = 199)

Item	No Change (n = 110)	Thinking Change (n = 45)	Changed (n = 44)	P-value
Emotional Exhaustion	1.9* ± 0.1	3.2* ± 0.2	2.0* ± 0.2	<0.0001
Depersonalization	1.4* ± 0.1	2.2* ± 0.2	1.4* ± 0.2	0.0002
Personal Accomplishment	5.2* ± 0.1	4.7* ± 0.2	5.2* ± 0.2	0.007

MBI = Maslach Burnout Inventory.

SEM = standard error of the mean.

No change = did not change jobs in last 5 years. Thinking change = considering changing jobs within 5 years. Changed = changed jobs within last 5 years.