

UNMASKING THE IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

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Abstract

Impostor phenomenon (IP) is an experience in which individuals attribute their success to external factors and maintain a fear of exposure as a fraud. Times of transition are particularly high-risk for IP. The transition between medical student and first year resident can be a time of high anxiety and imposter syndrome. Encouraging reflection and conversation about professional identity and self-doubt may decrease IP in first-year residents.

We presented new, first year residents with a formal lecture and reflective activity in which learners painted masks representing their internal and external selves. They also shared reflections with their peers about the activity and their thoughts about imposter syndrome. Prior to the session, learners completed the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) and free-text questions related to IP. Learners were invited to repeat the survey 2 weeks later. Descriptive statistics and inductive qualitative methods were used to analyze the results.

High IP was prevalent among first-year residents. Preliminary results suggest that a session on IP including a hands-on activity such as mask-making may help to mitigate feelings of impostorism and allow learners to reflect and create a therapeutic and bonding experience early in training.

Background & Purpose

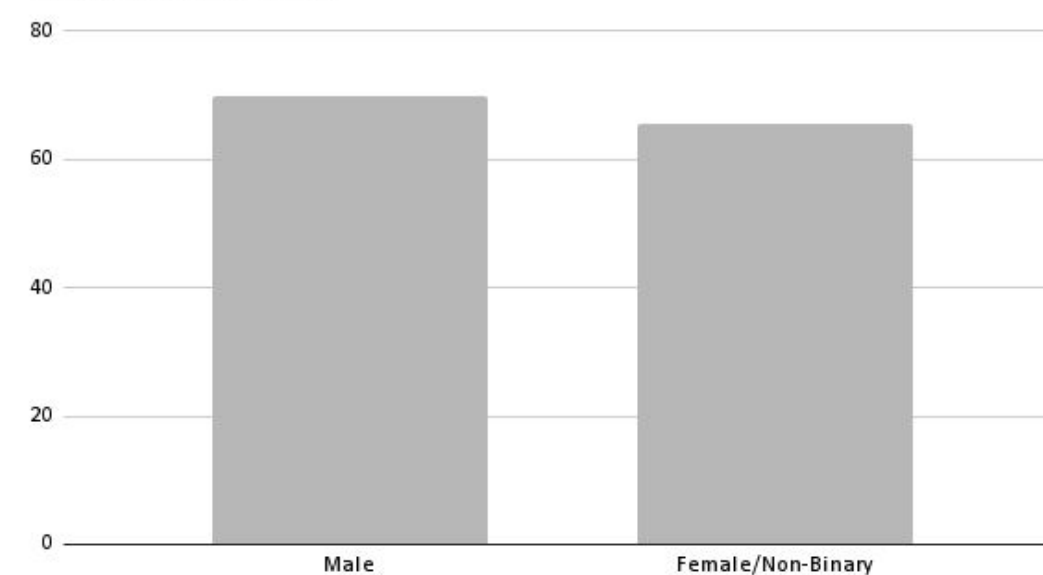
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The objective of this study is to determine the prevalence of impostor phenomenon and related attitudes

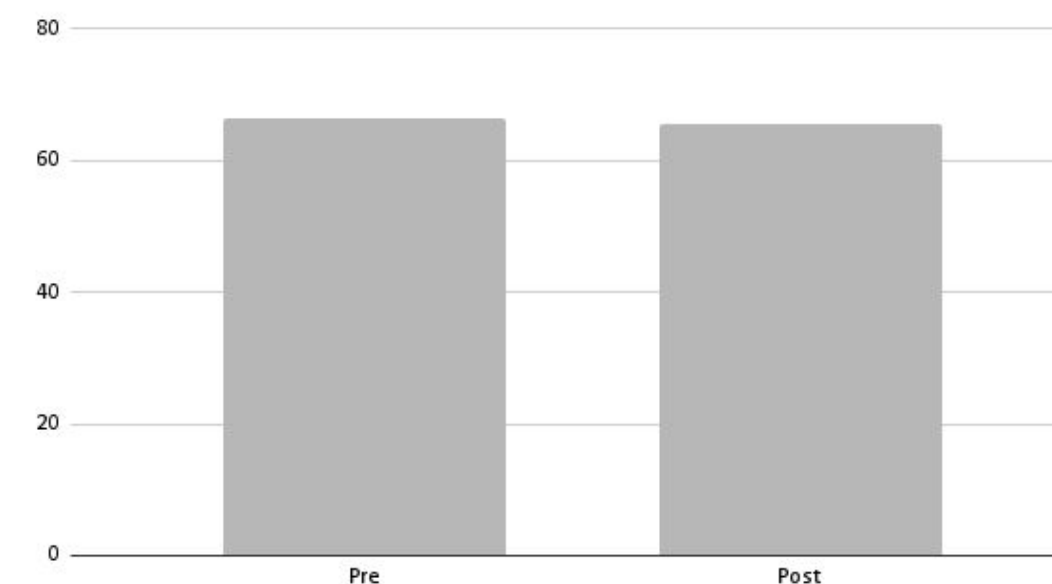
Methods

- Prospective mixed-methods study in July 2021
- 63 first-year residents (47 EM, 16 FM)
- Residents participated in a session involving a lecture and reflective activity during orientation
- Prior to session, learners completed a Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) and free-text questions related to IP
- Survey was repeated two weeks after session to assess for change
- Reflective activity involved painting masks to represent their internal and external selves
- Participants shared reflections with peers
- Descriptive statistics and inductive qualitative methods were used to analyze the results

Gender Comparison



Post-Session Comparison



Results

- 53 learners (84%) completed the survey prior to the IP session
- Mean CIPS score was 66.5 with scores >61 indicating high impostorism
- Pre-session CIPS ranged 42-100 (max 100)
- Female and non-binary learners had higher CIPS scores compared to male counterparts
- Mean combined female and non-binary learner scores vs male learner scores were 69.9 vs 65.5, respectively
- Mean post-session CIPS score decreased to 65.5
- Major qualitative themes of IP in participants included: IP in medical school, cyclic feelings, and self-doubt
- Themes describing IP session included: therapeutic and the value of shared experience

Conclusion

- High IP was prevalent among first-year residents at both pre-and post-session evaluation
- Preliminary results suggest that a session on IP including a hands-on activity such as mask-making may help to mitigate feelings of impostorism and allow learners to reflect and create a therapeutic and bonding experience early in training
- We plan to assess all participants at 1-year post-session to determine recall, IP, and related attitudes at that time with completion of CIPS and interview process

References

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