**Back pain and radioprotective gowns – The Gender Gap**

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Radioprotective gowns are an essential part of operating in orthopaedics. As we are aware from the evidence, surgeons, and in particular orthopaedic surgeons, are at risk of developing chronic neck and back pain. This is likely a result of the combination of of long operations, heavy equipment, radioprotective gowns and poor ergonomic set up.

Women are a minority in orthopaedics. Amongst trainees there has been an improvement with 20–25% of current trainees are women, however at consultant level this percentage is a lot lower at 5–7%.

Radioprotective gowns worn by trainees are frequently not well fitted and few surgeons have access to bespoke fitted gowns. A questionnaire given to 32 trainees in the region found a significant burden of back pain in trainees and 57% of surgeons felt their gowns were not appropriately fitted. In this study every woman questioned reported back pain as a result of operating and 87% felt the gowns used exacerbated back pain, this figure was 56% in men.

80% of surgeons felt that surgeons would benefit from bespoke fitted gowns, even those that did not themselves have severe back pain. 45% of trainees felt their pain was moderate to severe. In surgery we have the responsibility to protect ourselves and our colleagues from work based injury and illness. Back pain should not be ignored as a symptom and radioprotective gowns is a good place to start.

Overall the majority the gowns exacerbated their back pain during or after procedures, worse in women as described above. We can use this data and do what we can to provide trainees with a range of sizes whilst working in hospitals during their training. Anecdotally women sizes were less available in the departments and we can work to improve this and reduce the burden of pain amongst surgeons.