

# Psychological safety and wellbeing of dermatology residents during the COVID-19 pandemic

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused residency training to be changed significantly. Many dermatology residents were reassigned to other services to provide much-needed care. During these unprecedented times, high psychological safety for residents is necessary not only to promote mental wellbeing [1] but also to foster productive feedback [2] and improve patient outcomes [3].

## Objectives

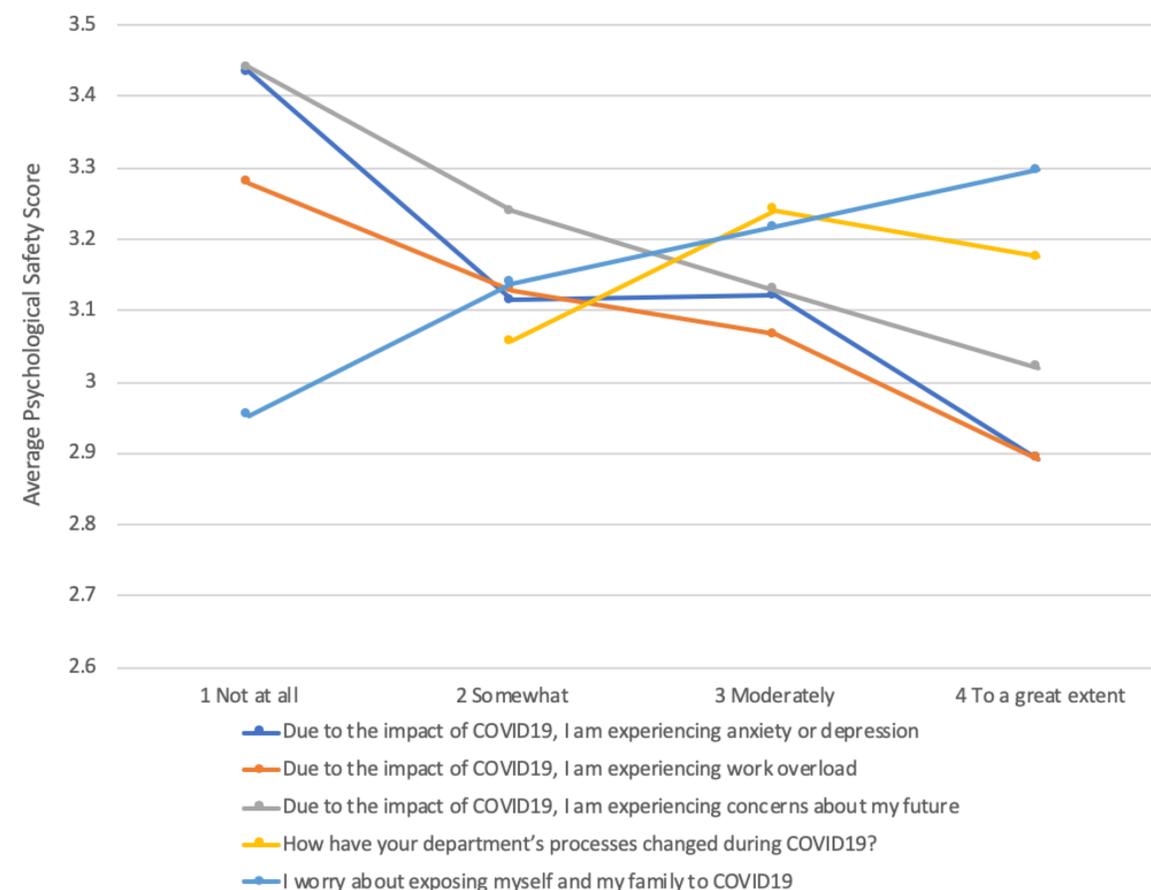
With our anonymous survey, we aimed to assess the wellbeing and psychological safety of dermatology residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Methods

This study was an online cross-sectional survey. The anonymous questionnaire (16 items) was sent to all ACGME approved dermatology residency program directors in May 2020. We measured psychological safety in the context of the pandemic by using a modified Psychological Safety Scale (PSS) that was adapted from the Edmondson Questionnaire. We also asked additional questions about demographics and how COVID-19 has impacted their mental health.

## Results

Using the 5-point Likert scale, the mean PSS score of 103 responses was 3.18 (SD 0.571). Dermatology residents who scored low (vs. high) on the PSS, which indicates poor psychological safety, were more likely to experience more severe anxiety or depression, work overload, and concerns about their future due to COVID-19. Interestingly, those who were more worried about COVID-19 exposure scored higher on the PSS. Lastly, magnitude of departmental changes did not seem to change the psychological safety of residents.



## Discussion

This study revealed that residents with good mental health and wellbeing are more likely to express higher levels of psychological safety. Our findings are aligned with previous research that suggests sense of safety can allow learners to worry less, especially about the consequences of their actions. As high psychological safety not only promotes more engaged learning but also improves interpersonal relationships and trust in teams, it plays an important role in both physical and mental health[4]. Therefore, it is crucial to promote sense of safety and wellbeing during these unprecedented times.

## Conclusion

Overall, psychological safety rating varied by the severity of the emotional and mental impact the pandemic has had on residents. Our data supports the need to further study the relationship between mental health and psychological safety of dermatology residents during this global crisis.

## Disclosure

Dr. Murina is a speaker and/or consultant for Abbvie, Amgen, Eli Lilly and Company, Janssen, Ortho-Dermatologics.

## Literature Cited

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