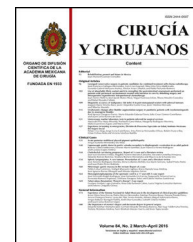




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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The surgeons ego. Utility and analysis[☆]



Sobre el ego de los cirujanos. Utilidad y análisis

The Real Academia Española (Royal Spanish Academy) of language defines ego from the Latin *ego*, I:

1. In Freud's psychoanalysis, the psychic apparatus that partially consciously is recognised as I, that controls sensation and mediates between the instincts of the id, the ideals of the super-ego and the reality of the outside world.
2. Excessive self esteem.¹

Its counterpart is the definition of humility. From the Latin: *humilītas*, *-ātis*:

1. Virtue which consists in being aware of one's own limitations and weaknesses, and acting in accordance with this awareness.
2. Lowness of birth or of any other species.
3. Submission, subordination.²

Dr. Julio Mayol³ a Spanish surgeon at the Hospital Clínico San Carlos de Madrid and academic from the National Royal Academy of Medicines, describes the surgeon's ego in the following manner:

"All human beings have an ego, some more and some less of one, but we all have an ego which we attempt to satisfy, particularly surgeons because of the work they do, the pressure they are under, and with their ego they compensate for their continuous confrontation with reality and frustration. It is a way of trying to accept uncertainty to some extent. If your ego is strong you can face up to situations the outcome of which you cannot predict, which also do not depend on others, but on you, we are pretty much aware that the effects depend on our handling of

the situation; although this is not always the case, others are around and they are also important, but the 2 of us are greatly aware of what we touch or do and that it may have consequences, and it is especially tough to face up to another human being and say: I have to do this and not believe that one is the best available professional at that time.

It would almost be unsound to say to someone, to say to another human being who has a problem that they have to take the risk and then not believe that you are at least the best person, if not the only one, or at least the best person who can resolve that problem."³

This description could be fitting for emergency physicians, cardiologists, intensive care physicians, orthopaedic surgeons, specialised nurses, paramedics, etc.

It is important the "egos" of the medical professional focus on maximum patient benefit as their objective, and that they are not the cause of dispute and acrimony, thus destroying the spirit of the profession.

In the end a "healthy ego" is a must for the successful outcome of human activity, especially that which involves the health of our fellow humankind.

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