

Eyes Don't Lie: Physician Fatigue Can be Revealed in Eyes

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A new study can detect physician fatigue from eye movements

Eyes can reveal extent of fatigue in physicians, a new study claims.

A team of researchers have shown that saccadic eye movement can reveal fatigue. These eye movements are voluntary rapid movements of the eye made when focussing on objects or shifting gaze. The study should a significant speed reduction of saccadic eye movements in a study after a 24-hour shift where doctors do not get any sleep.

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While the study showed fatigue, a concern for patients, it also showed that the fatigue did not affect physicians' surgery performance. To assess performance, researchers asked the physicians in the study to execute a simulated laparoscopic surgery before and after the shift. Researchers found no slackening in efficiency after the shift, indicating that physicians compensate for the fatigue by summoning all available resources for patient care.

"It is also true that those other professional competence resources can do little when there is an excess of working hours, and consequently those results are fundamental to contribute to the regulation of shifts and schedules, based on objective data on fatigue and performance", researchers from *Barrow Neurological Institute* and University of Granada said, according to a [press release](#).

Errors in treatment are attributed to adverse incidents in hospitals in 10 percent of such cases in Spain, while nearly half of such incidents could be avoided with safe clinical practises.

"For these reasons, all those strategies whose objective is to know the factors that lead to unsafe medical practices, and consequently diminish patient safety, are part of the agenda of several international organizations, including the World Health Organization," researchers said.

The study has raised questions about optimal number of hours physicians should work. Researchers pointed out that US residents work 80 hours week, the twice amount of time their counterparts in France or Spain work.

The study has been published in [Annals of Surgery](#).

Tags[fatigue](#), [physician](#), [eye movement](#), [saccadic movement](#), [Sleep](#)

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