

# The Factors that Influence a Surgical Resident's Subspecialty Decision

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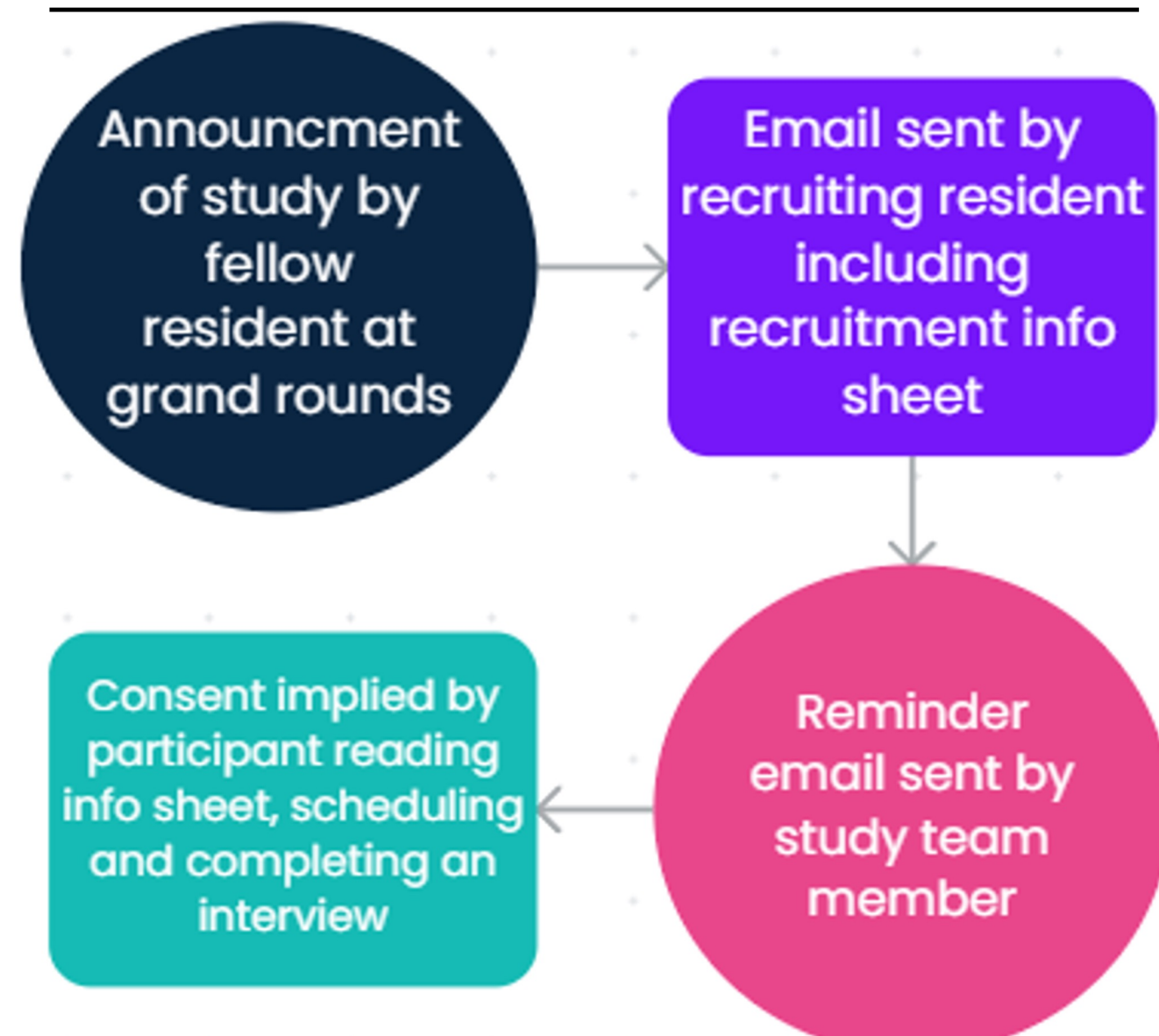
## Introduction

- Resident interest across surgical subspecialties is non uniform. Some subspecialties experience a short supply of trainees.<sup>1</sup>
- 80% of surgical residents pursue subspecialty training<sup>2</sup>, making it an important decision for the majority of them.
- Studies that have attempted to explore this were limited through the use of close-ended surveys.
- Using a qualitative, open-ended approach will provide rich data to better understand the decision-making process.<sup>3</sup>

## Aims and Objectives

- Determine the most common themes that impact subspecialty selection
- Make recommendations for subspecialties to attract more residents.
- Make recommendations to early residents deciding on their subspecialty.

## Recruitment Methods



## Methods

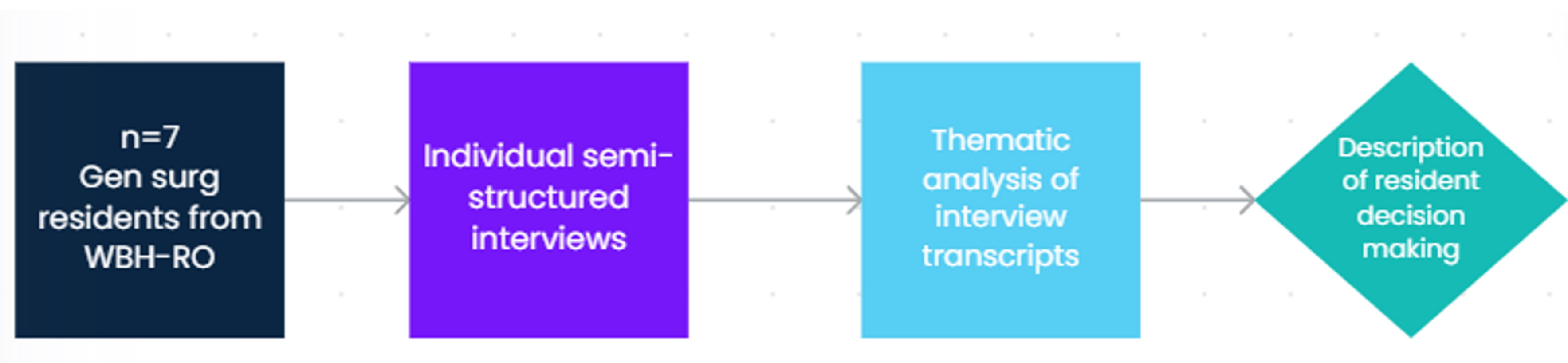


Fig. 1 Process diagram for data collection and analysis

## Results

Common influences on subspecialty decision:

- Anticipated schedule**
  - Participants preferred a predictable schedule that allowed for flexibility
  - "[My mom] was a person that traveled a lot for business...so she would miss a lot of things, and that's not really the lifestyle I wanted to put my own kids through."*
- Longevity in subspecialty**
  - There was concern about 'burning-out'
  - Participants desired a long, happy career in future subspecialty
  - Looked at attendings of subspecialties as model for future self
  - "I think [subspecialty] will be professionally rewarding and keep me energized in all my career."*
- Patient Physiology**
  - Some residents found it necessary to pursue a subspecialty that demanded dealing with and balancing complex patient physiology because of its intellectually stimulating nature
  - "I enjoy the physiology of critical care"*
  - "There's a lot of physiology which I really enjoy"*
- Work-life balance**
  - Residents desired to avoid a "tough lifestyle" (i.e. a heavy call schedule with long, demanding shifts)
  - "And [subspecialty] I don't love because of the unpredictable nature of it. They do great surgeries, and the anatomy is incredible, but I don't know if I want that lifestyle for my entire life."*

## Conclusions

- Residents in all stages of selecting a subspecialty had a diverse set of motivations and goals
- Although varying in relative importance for each resident, there were 4 common influences of subspecialty selection
  - Anticipated schedule
  - Longevity in subspecialty
  - Intellectually stimulating work environment
  - Work-life balance
- Subspecialties with the desire to recruit more applicants should make sure to communicate how they are compatible with these common influences
- Subspecialties that consistently experience a short supply of trainees may be served by reforming the training and working environment to better align with the goals of future trainees

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