

Expert Consensus for Key Components of a High-Quality Ventral Hernia Repair Operative Note

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Background

- Operative notes function by creating an archive of the steps of a procedure, including the surgical decision-making.
- They are an important medical and legal document that allows communication between physicians, staff, administrator, payors, patients, and legal experts.
- No current standards on the primary objectives of an effective operative note.
- Current guidance on writing an optimal operative note is provided by precedent, surgical societies, oversight committees and textbooks.
- Ventral hernia repair (VHR) is a commonly performed surgical procedure for defects of the abdominal wall fascia.
- Evolving methods, practices and techniques with substantial surgeon variability that emphasize the inclusion of valuable information

Objective

To characterize the key elements of a high-quality ventral hernia repair operative note.

Methods

Selection of expert panel

- n = 17
- Inclusion criteria: board-certified general surgeons with peer-reviewed publications on ventral hernia repairs and/or previous scientific work on operative note standards

Survey 1

- “What makes a high quality operative note?”

Survey 2

- 10 example operative notes
- “Identify features of an ideal/great operative note”

Survey 3

- Themes/subthemes compiled from surveys 1 and 2
- “Rank the following themes in order of decreasing importance”

- Thematic analysis of qualitative data through triangulation:**
 - Identification of an adequate and comprehensive list of themes/subthemes from participant’s responses using anonymous open-coding
- Likert scale ranked items:**
 - Numerical Likert scoring of all themes/subthemes followed by ranked assessment of the inclusion of themes in all VHR operative notes

Identified Themes

Figure 1

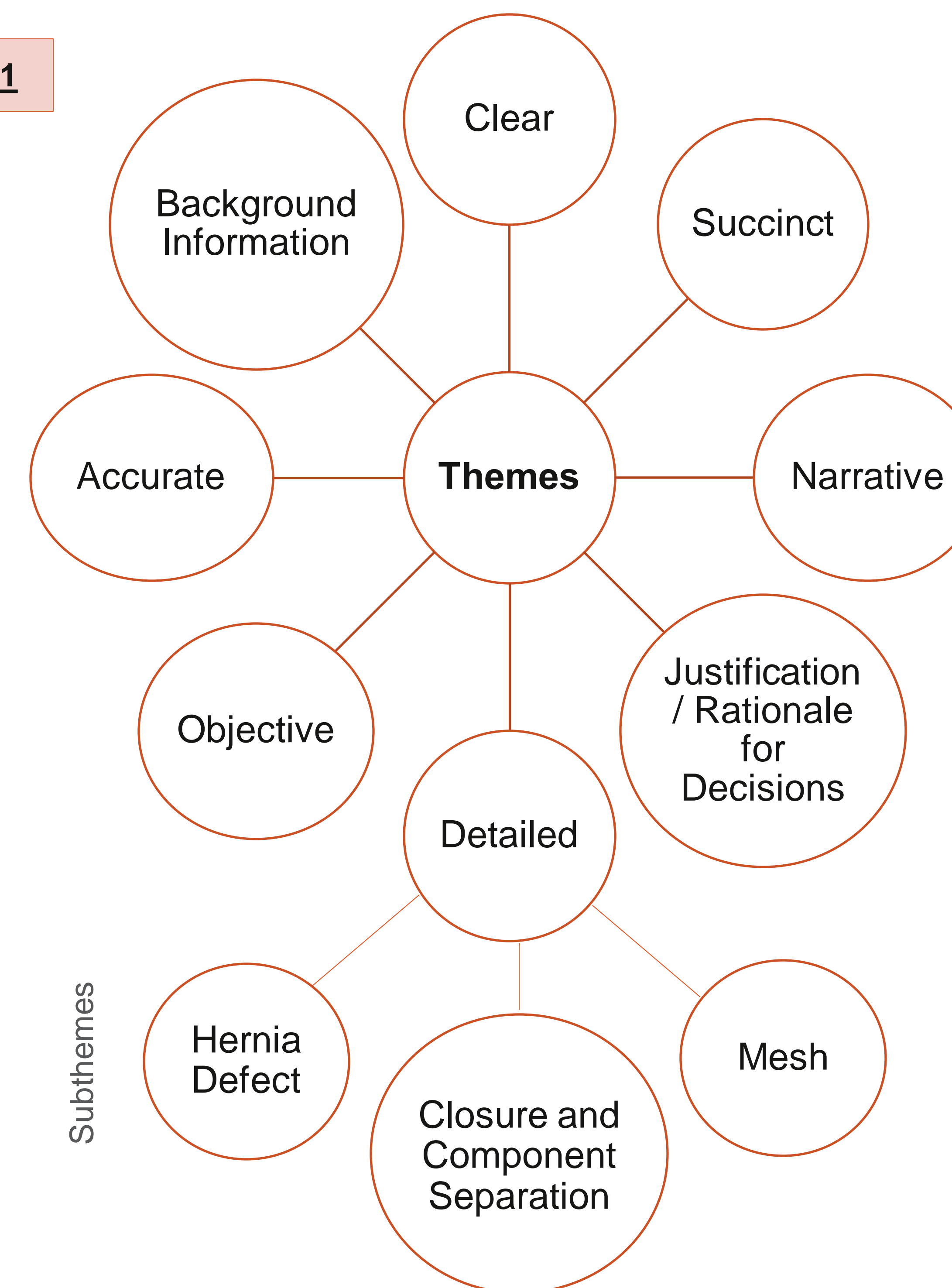
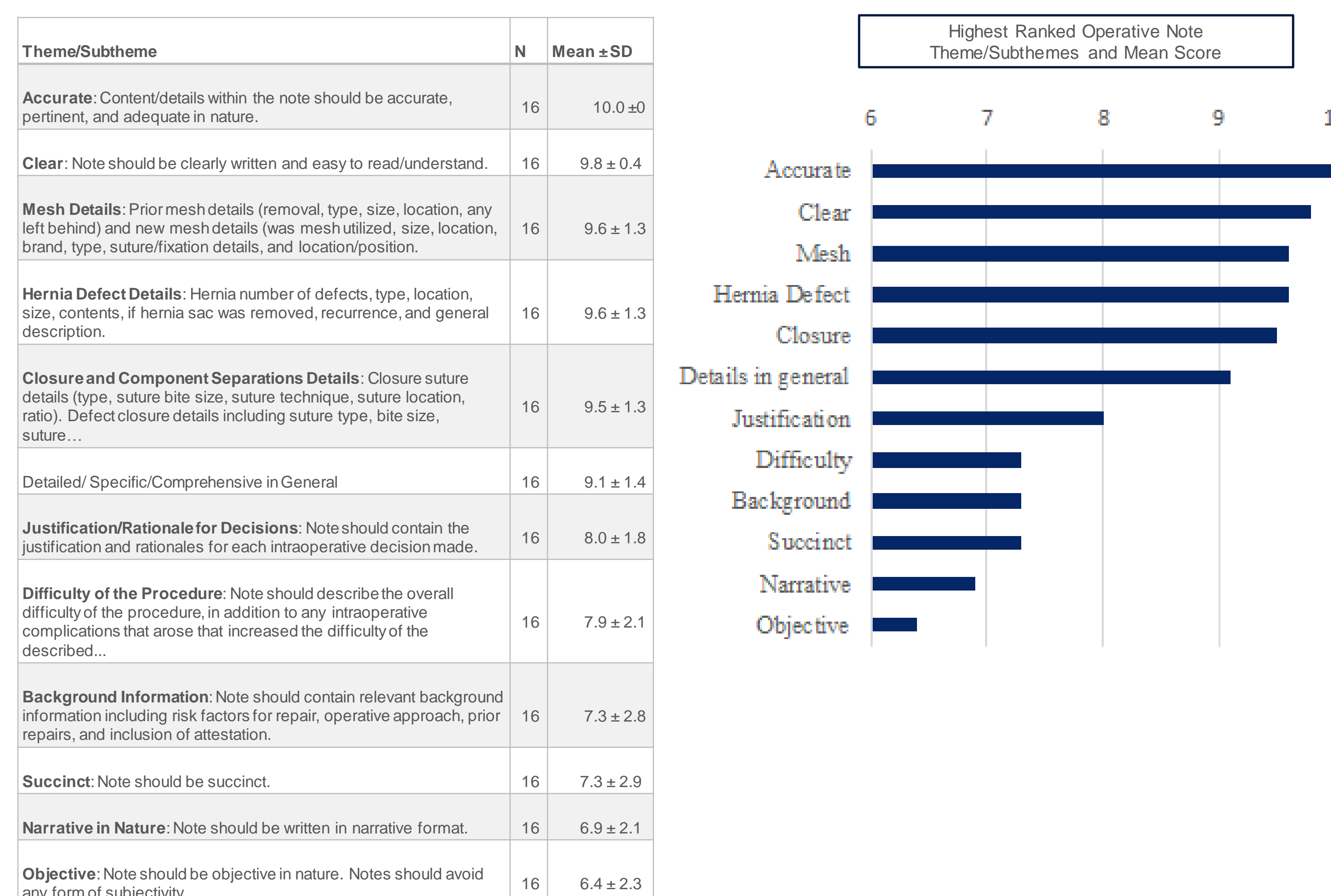


Figure 2: Mean Scores of Themes/Subthemes in response to “How strongly do you feel about the inclusion of the following themes in every VHR note?”



Discussion

- Inclusion of details does not, in itself, make for a high-quality operative note for ventral hernia repair
- Top ranked elements
 - Accuracy
 - Clarity
 - Details
 - Justification
- Improves communication
 - Amongst healthcare providers
 - Between physician and insurance companies
- Legal documentation
- Areas of future studies
 - Applications to other surgical procedures
 - Generalizability
 - Inclusion of other subthemes, i.e., patient BMI
- Limitations
 - Exclusively U.S.-based surgeons
 - Limits generalizability for outside countries
 - Extensive variations amongst surgeons

Conclusion

All general surgeons should acknowledge and make efforts to include the themes identified in this study when writing ventral hernia repair operative notes

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