

Singapore Orthopaedic Lecture 2018

The Emperor's New Clothes: Innovation In Spine Surgery

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'Emperor's new clothes: the title of a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen about an emperor who pays a lot of money for some new magic clothes which can only be seen by wise people. The clothes do not really exist, but the observers do not admit they cannot see them, for fear of appearing foolish'.

Innovation is vital to improving patient outcomes and furthering the art and science of spine surgery. There are many examples where disruptive technology answers a clinical need and adoption by the wider surgeon community takes place in a controlled manner with appropriate post-marketing surveillance and audit.

However, there are many instances where novel procedures and implants fail the test of time. In this presentation the reasons for these failures are discussed, focusing on conflicts of interest, industry marketing pressures and inadequate governance frameworks.

The talk will include some insights based on personal experience of implant development, involvement in post-marketing evaluation and industry consultancy.