Commentary: The first year—Are you ready?

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The contract has been signed, and many graduating trainees look forward to embarking on the next stage of their career. The transition from resident learner to surgeon in practice is both daunting and exciting. The many hours in residency have prepared trainees to tackle clinical challenges¹; on the other hand, however, new graduates feel less confident in the professional, business, and interpersonal skill sets needed to be successful and productive in their first faculty position.² In their article in this issue of the Journal, Fiedler and Sihag³ identify the unique obstacles young surgeons face during this transition period and provide practical advice for navigating and overcoming these barriers.

A young surgeon should not wholeheartedly embody the word *independent* but rather should seek to build a support network to help this transition. Years of residency training has not adequately equipped trainees to handle the nonclinical aspects of starting a practice. Good mentorship can fill in these gaps. A study survey by the Society of Thoracic Surgeons Workforce on Thoracic Surgery Resident Issues Transition to Practice Task Force found that 84% of recent graduates of thoracic residency programs stated that a formal mentoring program would be beneficial.⁴ Although mentorship from a senior surgeon is vital, the benefits of seeking peer mentorship could be invaluable. This type of mentorship can reduce isolation and provide comradery and additional social support for the early-career surgeon in navigating this new phase.^{5,6}

Understanding that each of these topics could be further explored, Fiedler and Sihag³ have given readers a great starting point for young surgeons to develop a fulfilling and successful career within cardiothoracic surgery. They provide useful additional resources for career development for readers to consider in more depth. With the unique challenges of the health care environment today and changes in

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Central Message

The transition to practice presents unique challenges for young surgeons. More tools are needed to increase the preparedness to practice for the early-career surgeon.

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the training paradigm, the “cookbooks” of the past for building a successful practice may no longer be as applicable. Further investigations are needed for a better understanding of this transition period for young surgeons in the current era. Data from these studies would help in the development of specific training tools needed to equip our trainees better for this next phase of their careers.

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