

## LETTERS

## SURGICAL PERFORMANCE

## Deterioration in colour perception with age might be key

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The study by Duclos and colleagues is fascinating, particularly for us older surgeons.<sup>1</sup> It is intriguing that hypocalcaemia as a result of inadvertent removal of the parathyroids increased with the surgeon's age but the other measured complication—damage to the recurrent laryngeal nerve—did not.

Perhaps this is because colour perception deteriorates with age. A subtle difference in colour is often all that distinguishes parathyroid tissue from other structures. After having had a new plastic lens inserted for a cataract my colour perception is better through the “new” eye. I am pleased to say that my own audited

results have not yet changed with age. If they do, that will be time to retire.

Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 Duclos A, Peix JL, Colin C, Kraimps J-L, Menegaux F, Pattou F, et al; CATHY Study Group. Influence of experience on performance of individual surgeons in thyroid surgery: prospective cross sectional multicentre study. *BMJ* 2012;344:d8041. (11 January.)

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