SP10.2.2
COVID-19 impact on Surgical Training and Recovery Planning (COVID-STAR) - A Cross-Sectional Observational Study

COVID-STAR Collaborative
COVID-STAR Collaborative Study Group

Aims: The COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in the delivery of surgical services which impact on surgical training. This study aimed to investigate the qualitative impact of COVID-19 on surgical training in the United Kingdom (UK) & Republic of Ireland (ROI).

Methods: A national, collaborative, cross-sectional study involving 13 surgical trainee associations distributed a pan-surgical specialty questionnaire on the impact of COVID-19 on surgical training (11th May - 8th June 2020). Various aspects of training were assessed. This study was reported according to STROBE guidelines.
Results: 810 completed responses were analysed (M:401/F:390) from all deaneries and training grades. A significant negative impact of the pandemic on surgical training experience was observed. (Weighted average = 8.66). 41% of respondents (n = 301) were redeployed. Complete loss of training was reported in elective operating (69.5%), outpatient activity (67.3%) and endoscopy (69.5%). A reduction of > 50% was reported in emergency operating (48%) and completion of work-based assessments (WBAs) (46%). 3.3% (n = 17) of respondents reported plans to leave medicine altogether. Cancellations in study leave and regional teaching programmes without rescheduling were reported in 72% and 60% of the cohort respectively. Elective operative exposure and WBAs completion were the primary reported factors affecting potential trainee progression. Overall, > 50% of trainees (n = 377) felt they would not meet the competencies required for that training period.

Conclusions: COVID-19 has had a negative impact on surgical training across all grades and specialties, with implications for trainee progression, recruitment and retention of the surgical workforce.