COVID-19 impact on Surgical Training And Recovery Planning (COVID-STAR) Survey

COVID-STAR collaborative research group
COVID-STAR Collaborative

Corresponding Author: Mr. Joshua Michael Clements
(joshua.michael.clements@doctors.org.uk)

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in dynamic changes to healthcare delivery. Surgery as a specialty has been significantly affected and with that the delivery of surgical training.

Method: This national, collaborative, cross sectional study comprising 13 surgical trainee associations distributed a pan surgical specialty survey on the COVID-19 impact on surgical training over a 4-week period (11th May - 8th June 2020). The survey was voluntary and open to medical students and surgical trainees of all specialties and training grades. All aspects of training were qualitatively assessed. This study was reported according to STROBE guidelines.

Results: 810 completed responses were analysed (M401: F 390) with representation from all deaneries and training grades. 41% of respondents (n = 301) were redeployed with 74% (n = 223) redeployed > 4 weeks. Complete loss of training was reported in elective operating (69.5% n = 474), outpatient activity (67.3%, n = 457), Elective endoscopy (69.5% n = 246) with > 50% reduction in training time reported in emergency operating (48%, n = 326) and completion of work-based assessments (WBA) (46%, n = 309). 81% (n = 551) reported course cancellations and departmental and regional teaching programmes were cancelled without rescheduling in 58% and 60% of cases respectively. A perceived lack of Elective operative exposure and completions of WBA’s were the primary reported factor affecting potential training progression. Overall, > 50% of trainees (n = 377) felt they would not meet the competencies required for that training period.

Conclusion: This study has demonstrated a perceived negative impact on numerous aspects of surgical training affecting all training specialities and grades.