

AB028. SOH21AS121. COVID-19— is surgical training back on track?

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Background: The World Health Organisation declared a global pandemic on the 11th March 2020 resulting in implementation of methods to contain viral spread, including curtailment of all elective and non-emergent interventions. During the initial lockdown phase, many institutions experienced changes in rostering practices and redeployment of trainees to non-surgical services, and surgical trainees initially experienced a reduction in operative exposure. We aim to assess whether or not training opportunities have returned to pre lockdown levels.

Methods: Surgical trainees were surveyed anonymously regarding changes in working and educational practices since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic on 11th March 2020. The survey was initially circulated in May 2020 to both core and higher The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) surgical trainees. A second round of the survey was circulated in October 2020. Questions encompassed operative experience, educational activities, access to senior-led training and access to simulation/practical based training methods prior to, during and post the first lockdown phase.

Results: Overall, primary survey response rate was 29% (n=98/340) and secondary survey 17.6% (n= 61/340). Operative sessions (P<0.0001) and cases performed (P<0.0001) no longer show any significant difference compared to pre pandemic levels. Exposure to formal

teaching and education sessions have returned to pre COVID levels (P<0.0001). Twenty-three percent of trainees had an examination cancelled, 53% of these trainees have subsequently sat these examinations. Of note 27.7% have had courses cancelled, and 97% of these have not been rescheduled.

Conclusions: Surgical training and education have been significantly impacted in light of COVID-19. This is likely to continue to fluctuate in line with subsequent waves. Significant efforts have to be made to enable trainees to meet educational and operative targets.

Keywords: COVID-19; lockdown; surgical; training; logbook

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Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethical Statement: The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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