



AB112. SOH22ABS145. The impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on bariatric tourism in Ireland

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Background: Bariatric Tourism is common practice, yet patient safety and selection is unregulated and potentially suboptimal. As a result, the National Bariatric Service at St. Vincent's University Hospital (SVUH) utilizes a significant proportion of resources to treat complications arising from bariatric surgery abroad. We hypothesized that the number of presenting complications from bariatric tourism has risen since the beginning of the coronavirus disease (COVID) pandemic.

Methods: A retrospective review was conducted to identify individuals who underwent bariatric surgery abroad since 2018 and presented to the SVUH Emergency Department and/or the Bariatric Service by hospital transfer or outpatient clinic. We compared the number of presenting complications from June 2018 to February 2020 with those from March 2020 to November 2021 using chi-squared analysis.

Results: From March 2020 to November 2021, there was a 354% increase (92 *vs.* 26) in hospital presentations relating to bariatric surgery complications compared to the 18 months prior to the pandemic. Mean age was 39 with 89% being female. Fifty-nine percent of the 74 patients travelled during the pandemic, primarily to Turkey (43%). Sleeve gastrectomy was the most common procedure (42%),

followed by gastric band (36%). Complications include leak (10%), slipped or eroded gastric band (36%), twisting stomach with chronic pain, vomiting (28%).

Conclusions: There has been a higher incidence of patients presenting to SVUH with post-operative complications from bariatric surgeries abroad over the last 18 months. Many of these complications require urgent surgery. This burden is costly and will only lead to longer waiting lists for an already under-resourced National Bariatric Service.

Keywords: Bariatric tourism; surgical tourism; post-op complications; weight loss surgery; global bariatric healthcare

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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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