



AB060. SOH23ABS_219. Debates in general surgery: survey results from an online conference in Ireland during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) era

Enda Hannan, Dara Walsh, Colin Peirce,
Michael Moloney, Calvin Coffey

Department of Surgery, University Hospital Limerick, Limerick,
Ireland

Background: The challenges posed by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) mandated that an international surgical conference be conducted online via a web-based platform over two consecutive years. This posed a unique opportunity to survey an international surgical community on a wide range of potentially controversial issues.

Methods: All registrants whom attended the virtual conferences were invited to participate in an anonymous electronic survey that focused on important subjects within a wide range of domains encompassing surgical training, technique, healthcare management and surgery in the COVID-19 era. Statistical analysis was performed between results from each year to assess for consistency or discordancy of opinions.

Results: Of 445 attendees in 2021 and 387 attendees in 2022, response rates were 51.2% (n=228) and 52.7% (n=204) respectively. Findings showed a majority believed a robotic approach optimal for rectal cancer surgery (2022: 68.8%, 2021: 61.2%). Most felt that the restructured surgical training programme had negatively impacted training (2022: 62%, 2021: 64.1%). There was broad rejection of a newly proposed public-only consultant contract (2022: 89.8%, 2021: 71.1%). The majority supported mandatory vaccination for healthcare workers (2022: 81.5%, 2021: 73%).

Conclusions: The current study offers a rare and valuable insight into the practices, opinions and concerns of current and future surgical leaders. The survey offers multiple important learning points, such as providing perspective regarding ambiguous areas of surgical practice which may serve to guide individual decision making. It also offers valuable constructive criticism regarding the structure of current surgical training and reveals alarming concerns regarding the sustainability of a high-quality surgical workforce in Ireland.

Keywords: Controversies in surgery; coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); debates in surgery; virtual conference; online conference

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Footnote

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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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