

AB026. SOH21AS009. Surgical training in the COVID-19 era: should we plan for a persistent pandemic?

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Background: The COVID-19 pandemic poses unparalleled problems for the safe delivery of surgical care worldwide, initially resulting in the cancellation of all but the most urgent procedures. This has been paralleled by a reduction in surgical training opportunities, with long-term implications for the future delivery of surgical care.

Methods: A retrospective study was carried out of all general surgical procedures performed in our centre over a 15-month period; April 2019–June 2020 inclusive. Data were collected on the number of procedures performed, the complexity of cases and the seniority of the operating surgeon and first assistant. Quarterly data were compared to quantify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operative exposure of trainees.

Results: A total of 2,235 procedures were performed over the 15-month study period of which 192 cases, representing 8% of total operative activity, were performed in Q2-2020 compared with 579 cases in Q2-2019, a reduction of 67.6% decrease in operative activity between the two periods necessitated by anti-COVID-19 measures. Non-consultant doctors of all grades suffered a large corresponding decrease in their operative exposure, with the non-training grade registrars and more junior trainees worse affected.

Conclusions: The diminished operative exposure at our centre is probably reflective of the international experience.

As the world battles second and even third waves of the pandemic, novel approaches to surgical training must be substituted for traditional methods as we learn to live with this and perhaps future pandemics, the best of which may be retained to enhance future training when the new normality is restored.

Keywords: Coronavirus pandemic; general surgery; surgical training

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Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: This study has been published in *British Journal of Surgery*. The authors have no other 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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