

AB036. SOH21AS225. The impact of COVID on surgical provision in Ireland: lessons learned and new possibilities

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Background: The unprecedented burden of the COVID pandemic has brought with it many challenges including economic, social, infrastructural, and crucially significant disruptions in healthcare provision. Consequently, certain aspects of elective care have been deprioritised to enable health systems to respond resulting in growing waiting lists, delayed and in some cases suboptimal care. The purpose of the current study is to evaluate the impact of COVID on elective scheduled care nationally.

Methods: Data was sourced from the National Quality Assurance Improvement System via Health Atlas Ireland for the months March–August inclusive over a three-year period (2018–2020). Procedures were divided into elective and emergency and data was identified for the major specialities.

Results: During the months of March, April and May 2020, there was a reduction in elective surgical activity of 47%, 83% and 75% respectively compared to the same period over the preceding 2 years. This was the case for all 11 major specialities in the study cohort, with 91% reduced activity reported in Vascular and 92% in ENT during April. In the three subsequent months after easing of lockdown restrictions and curtailment of elective procedures national elective scheduled care was still 33% below the same period

in 2018 and 2019. Similarly, endoscopy figures reduced by 90% over the three months of COVID leading to suboptimal and delayed diagnostics.

Conclusions: The impact of COVID has been profound in elective surgical care and consequently, training and waiting lists have suffered immensely. This may, however, provide new avenues to replace the current model of care and alternatives to the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

Keywords: COVID; elective surgery; waiting lists; national quality assurance improvement system; Health Atlas Ireland; surgical training

Acknowledgments

Funding: None.

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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doi: 10.21037/map-21-ab036

Cite this abstract as: Donlon NE, Hayes C, Ramjit S, Irwin S, Roopnarinesingh R, Mealy K. The impact of COVID on surgical provision in Ireland: lessons learned and new possibilities. *Mesentery Peritoneum* 2021;5:AB036.