



Association of Surgeons in Training
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Dear Surgical Trainees,

14th March 2020

RE: COVID-19. The implications for surgical trainees in the delivery of care and training

COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation.¹ It will have significant effects on the health of the general population, including the surgical workforce, and the capacity of our health system to function effectively. The uncertainty of the situation is unprecedented. To assist and inform surgical trainees, ASiT Council and the 15 speciality associations that represent surgical trainees across all grades and specialities have prepared this statement to support our trainees and bring together links to the current information. We highlight how trainees will be affected during this critical time. We advise you to check the referenced sources of information daily.

Current Status

As cases and deaths continue to rise, The United Kingdom (UK) and Republic of Ireland (ROI) are moving from a containment to a delay phase which intends to flatten the curve such that the number of cases remains within the capacity of our health services. This is crucial to protect patients and hence minimise the mortality rate of the virus following the Chief Medical Officer's (UK) and National Public Health Emergency Team's (ROI) escalation of risk from moderate to high.³

Patient and Colleague Safety

The number one priority for all healthcare professionals, including surgical trainees, is and will always be, to deliver the optimum standard of healthcare. However, we must also emphasise the importance of trainee safety.⁴ At an individual level, we must be exemplary in our infection control, hand hygiene and personal/respiratory protective equipment (R/PPE) behaviours and demonstrate courage and leadership when observing all self-isolation guidelines both in the UK⁵ and ROI.⁶ ASiT and the speciality associations urge you to support and cooperate with all members of the multidisciplinary team, particularly our acute emergency, medical and critical care specialities. We know that surgical trainees will demonstrate the flexibility, diligence, collegiality and professionalism required to deliver the best quality care for our patients. We have a duty to work with all healthcare professionals to achieve this.

Healthcare Delivery

Healthcare delivery must adapt to the current climate as surgical trainees are re-deployed into unfamiliar environments. This will require trainees to face challenges that they may not be accustomed to in their usual practice. We are guided by the four Chief Medical Officers' combined statement calling us to stick to the basic principles of being a good doctor through this difficult period.⁶ In order to protect patients and healthcare providers, trainees should act within their capabilities and with appropriate supervision. The local Postgraduate Dean should be made aware of any trainees being deployed to