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ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS
MEDIA RELEASE



Reduced Surgical Mortality in Australia

October 10, 2017

The 8th National Report of the Australian and New Zealand Audits of Surgical Mortality (ANZASM) was released today by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), which highlighted the continual reduction in adverse events since the first national report.

The ANZASM 2016 Report, involving the clinical review of all cases where patients have died while under the care of a surgeon, showed that the proportion of cases reporting adverse events has remained significantly lower than when the first National Report was produced in 2009.

ANZASM Chairman, Professor Guy Maddern, said that the reduction over time was pleasing and highlighted the value of the audit since its inception.

“In 2016 the proportion of cases with adverse events was 2.9% compared to 4.4% in 2013. A proportion of more recent cases are still undergoing assessment, so the figures for 2016 may change slightly.”

“But even so what we have seen across the last five years is the proportion of adverse events remaining maintaining the initial drops that we saw from our earlier reports. In 2009 the proportion of adverse events was approximately 6% so the drop has clearly been significant.”

“It is impossible to say for sure whether we can attribute this reduction to the audit. However, what we do know for sure is that the audit allows us to identify trends, and to monitor and address these issues as required.”

“Since we first began conducting the audit across Australia and New Zealand in 2009, the number of surgeons participating in the process has increased from 60.4% to 98.3%. We have access to much more comprehensive data further adding to the ongoing knowledge of the participants and potentially leading to better outcomes for all surgical patients.”

“As an example, seminars have been facilitated based on in-depth investigations of the issues identified in the audit. In recent times state and territory audit programs have held successful and engaging symposiums on issues such as end of life care, and RACS also recently released [Guidelines for conducting effective Morbidity and Mortality meetings for Improved Patient Care.](#)”

Professor Maddern said other key highlights from the 2016 report included:

- The number of cases involving obesity as a comorbidity continues to increase. Obesity has overtaken hepatic issues in terms of frequency since the last report. One of the recommendations from the audit is the delivery of themed national

Media inquiries: **Gabrielle Forman**
Manager, Communications & Advocacy
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
(03) 9249 1263

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