Section of Academic Surgery

The membership of the Section of Academic Surgery has now exceeded 200.

This year, the Surgical Research Society became a subcommittee of the Section of Academic Surgery and, thus, now comes under the College umbrella. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Surgical Research Society Annual Scientific Meeting, a dinner was held in November with many past members of the Society attending.

The Chair of the Section of Academic Surgery, Mr Richard Hanney, has joined with the past Chair, Prof. John Windsor, in supporting the new Foundation for Surgery Senior Lecturer Fellowship, a valuable initiative which demonstrates the commitment that the College is making to the development of academic surgery and surgeons.

Morbidity Audits

The College is a leading advocate for the use of audit to improve and maintain standards of surgical care. For 15 years, the College has been involved in the business of creating and managing national and bi-national clinical databases in order to support its Fellows in this essential part of professional practice. Details regarding each current audit activity can be found below.

BreastSurgANZ Quality Audit

The BreastSurgANZ Quality Audit (BQA) originated as a quality assurance tool for all surgeons treating early breast cancer patients in Australia and New Zealand. It was set up by the College Breast Section and has been continually collecting data since 1998. It is now directed by the Breast Surgeons of Australia and New Zealand, Inc. (BreastSurgANZ).

In 2013, the BQA added a new field: gestational status. This will allow for research into treatment for women diagnosed with early breast cancer when pregnant or within 12 months of being pregnant. The BQA is delighted to be collaborating with the University of New South Wales on this important research.

The BQA continued its collaboration with Cancer Australia with research into risk factors for poorer breast cancer outcomes in residents of remote areas of Australia, factors predictive of treatment by Australian breast surgeons of invasive female breast cancer by mastectomy rather than breast conserving surgery, factors predictive of immediate breast reconstruction following mastectomy for invasive breast cancer, and risk factors for poorer breast cancer outcomes among residents of lower socioeconomic areas of Australia. This project also incorporated research into breast cancer and breast cancer survivals of New Zealand women, with funding assistance from the New Zealand Ministry of Health.
ANZGOSA Audit

The ANZGOSA Audit has been designed for the Australian and New Zealand Gastric and Oesophageal Surgical Association (ANZGOSA) as a self-assessment tool for its members. The audit has been set up to collect and store clinical and pathological details of patients undergoing surgery for oesophago-gastric cancer or gastrointestinal stromal tumour (GIST) in Australia and New Zealand.

In 2013, the audit implemented an institutional upload program. This program is an alternative submission pathway for surgeons who already enter data similar to the ANZGOSA Audit dataset into an existing database. Institutions such as hospitals or registries can have data directly uploaded into the audit, which saves surgeons from having to re-enter these data manually. The first upload was completed in September 2013.

The audit also introduced the option for de-identified data collection. This allows surgeons to utilise the audit system without having to directly identify their patients. This is in addition to the high security and encryption that was already in place on the system. Participants can choose to enter identified or de-identified data according to their own personal situation.

Rural Procedural Audit

The Rural Procedural Audit (RPA) is a partnership between the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) and Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG). This project provides support for rural centres in Australia, as well as individual clinicians, to collect and analyse audit data on designated procedures using an electronic data collection tool.

Reports for all Colleges were finalised in 2013. Users were able to report on their patient outcomes for a selection of pre-determined areas of interest. CUSUM reports were also made available, with the ability to set individualised parameters. Further feedback to all participants will be distributed at the end of the project, showing their performance against College indicators compared with their de-identified peers.

This project comes to a close at the end of 2013. Rural surgeons will continue to be able to access the RPA dataset through the College’s Morbidity Audit and Logbook Tool (MALT). A standalone version of the final RPA system will also be available to download from the College website for those with limited internet access or a desire for a local alternative for audit.

Morbidity Audit and Logbook Tool

The Morbidity Audit and Logbook Tool (MALT) is a system provided by the College for its Fellows, Trainees and International Medical Graduates. The tool was created by the College to simplify the process of logbook data collection and training board reporting requirements for surgical Trainees and to provide a generic audit platform for use by Fellows.

The rollout to additional specialties for SET and IMGs has occurred in 2013. A large program of additional functionality is being developed, including a custom reporting tool to allow all users of MALT to design their own reports, an import tool, and a number of small enhancements requested by users. Work has also commenced on an app.