MEDIA RELEASE

RACS celebrates its women in surgery on International Women’s Day

Tuesday 6 March, 2018

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is proud to support and celebrate its women in surgery this International Women’s Day, Thursday 8 March 2018. RACS has been running a week long social media campaign to profile and celebrate the women working in surgery.

Dr Christine Lai, a Breast and Endocrine surgeon and the new Chair of the RACS Women in Surgery Section hopes to use her new role to promote leadership, role modelling, flexible training and advocacy. She also looks forward to supporting RACS efforts towards diversity, equity and inclusion.

“I’m very excited to be joining the RACS Council at this time of change. Gender equity within the practice of surgery is very important to us, therefore we have set ourselves some ambitious targets including increasing the number of women in surgical training from the current 29 per cent to 40 per cent by 2021.

“The challenge of attracting women to surgical careers is not unique in Australia or New Zealand, but, since half the medical graduates are female, there is a need to attract the best graduates to surgery, and the College of Surgeons is actively pursuing that goal”, Dr Lai said.

RACS is working hard to encourage more women into leadership positions with women now comprising 32 per cent of its Board. As part of its Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety Action Plan, RACS released its Diversity and Inclusion Plan in late 2016. This outlines the many actions RACS is taking to build an inclusive culture in the surgical profession and remove barriers to women pursuing a surgical career.

Dr Rachel Care, an Otolaryngology Trainee and Chair of RACS Trainees’ Association said that barriers to participation in surgical careers need to be addressed and diversity in surgery needs to be encouraged.

“We aspire for greater diversity in surgery with increased participation from women and indigenous doctors in surgical training. While there is now gender equity amongst medical graduates there continues to be real and perceived barriers to women entering surgical professions. It is important that we break down these barriers and provide strong mentorship to ensure the diversity of our surgeons reflects the diversity of our communities,” she said.

With so much momentum and passion for gender equity, International Women’s Day at RACS will be a special day of encouragement and pride, as well as enthusiasm and united strength for women in surgery for the future.

Dr Cathy Ferguson, RACS Vice President and Otolaryngologist Head and Neck Surgeon said that International Women’s Day is an important recognition of women across the whole of society.

“I am pleased to celebrate this day, but recognise that we must continue to work actively to ensure that women everywhere are treated as equals. In surgery we must pay attention to the needs of our female colleagues, particularly in regards to flexible training opportunities, but we must also look to promote and support women in all aspects of life as a surgeon,” she said.

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RACS staff will also celebrate International Women’s Day by holding a morning tea on 8 March to recognise the importance of the day. Paediatric Surgeon, Dr Liz McLeod will talk about her experience working with RACS Global Health on humanitarian planning.

Ends.

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)
RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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