



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Assessing the value of simulated surgical skills training

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Delegates to the 79th Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been apprised of the findings of a study into the value of the Simulated Surgical Skills Program (SSSP).

The SSSP, funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Health and Ageing, is charged with the development, implementation and assessment of a new laparoscopic surgical skills training curriculum. Assessment of surgical simulation equipment for teaching surgical Trainees commenced in 2009 in South Australia and subsequently at sites in Victoria, Western Australia, New South Wales and recently in Queensland. In addition, a mobile simulation vehicle was outfitted with surgical simulators in 2010 to increase participation in metropolitan Sydney and rural areas of New South Wales.

The Director of Surgery at Adelaide's Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Professor Guy Maddern, said assessing the effectiveness of the training was designed across four separate but related subsections:

- The acquisition and maintenance of skills;
- Low versus high fidelity simulation equipment;
- Surgical simulation versus traditional training; and
- The effect of fatigue on surgical simulation skills.

Participants in the study included final year medical students, interns, surgical Trainees and experienced surgeons.

Professor Maddern, whose expertise in surgical assessment and audit is reflected in his work as Surgical Director of the College's Australian Safety and Efficacy Register of New Interventional Procedures - Surgical (ASERNIP-S), said the results were promising.

"Initial data indicates that once simulated surgical skills are learnt they are retained for at least six months without further experience in surgery. While assessment and data analysis is still continuing for other questions, it is safe to say that this research program will facilitate the development of a curriculum for laparoscopic simulation training for use in the Australian healthcare system," Professor Maddern said.

Professor Maddern's presentation is one of hundreds at this year's ASC, covering all surgical specialties and aspects of surgical history and education. Nearly 2,000 delegates are expected to attend the ASC, which runs from 4 to 7 May and is being held at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre. The ASC program is available online at www.surgeons.org

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