



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Ultrasound usage embraced by breast surgeons

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Delegates to the 80th Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told that surgeon performed ultrasound is being increasingly embraced by breast surgeons worldwide as an integral part of patient assessment, but the extent of its application within Australasia is not well documented.

Mr Michael Law, a Melbourne based breast surgeon, sought to fill this gap by undertaking a study aimed at evaluating the current office-based usage patterns of ultrasound and identifying suitable future training models.

Mr Law sent an online survey to members of Breast Surgeons of Australia and New Zealand (BreastSurgANZ) between July and September 2010, with emphases on practice demographics, access to ultrasound equipment, usage and biopsy patterns and training.

“Of the 126 surveys sent, 59 were returned,” Mr Law reported. “The majority of respondents were metropolitan based (64%), worked in both public and private sectors (71%) and also practised endocrine or general surgery (85%). The majority of surgeons had access to ultrasound equipment (63%), performed at least one ultrasound monthly (63%) but did not perform regular guided biopsies. Interestingly, rural practice did not affect access or usage patterns.

“Most respondents underwent structured ultrasound training (64%), which showed a significant association with greater ultrasound and biopsy usage, biopsy complexity, intra-operative and cross discipline applications. Most respondents favoured a structured training programme for future trainees (83.1%).

“The majority of Australasian breast surgeons have adopted office ultrasound to varying extents,” Mr Law concluded. “Geographic variation does not seem to lead to access inequity and variation in scanning patterns. Formal ultrasound training may result in a wider scope of clinical applications by increasing operator confidence and is the preferred model within a specialist breast curriculum.”

Mr Law’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 2 to 6 May and is being held at the Adelaide Convention Centre. The ASC program is available online at www.surgeons.org

Media inquiries: Michael Barrett, Media & PR Manager - 0429 028 933
Bridget Hooper, Media & PR Officer – 0437 008 891