



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Surgeons welcome inaugural Perioperative Mortality Report

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The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has welcomed the release of the inaugural Report of the Perioperative Mortality Review Committee (POMRC).

The Chair of the New Zealand National Board of the College, Mr Scott Stevenson, said the College had advocated for many years for a central system to review perioperative deaths in New Zealand.

“This Report is a positive indication that New Zealand has realised the potential benefits to patients of the POMRC,” Mr Stevenson said. “One of surgeons’ key concerns is to improve patient safety around the time of surgery, and experience indicates that audits of mortality help achieve this”.

“Many of the deaths identified within the report reflect the poor health of the patient rather than any consequence of the quality of operative care provided. However, it is essential that we identify those instances where death might have been avoided if care had been provided differently.”

“We need to learn from those instances and adjust our clinical practice to reflect the knowledge we have gained from perioperative mortality reviews,” he said.

The report gathered its information from existing data systems, and the POMRC wants to develop the data systems further to improve the information gathered.

“We agree with the POMRC that the submission of perioperative mortality data should become mandatory for all health care facilities and providers,” Mr Stevenson said.

“In the future, we hope to focus on instances of perioperative mortality in more detail. There are established programmes in other countries, such as Australia and Scotland, which review and provide detailed information on individual cases.”

“The centralised collection of that information enables trends to be identified that may not be immediately evident when smaller numbers of cases are reviewed.”

“If aspects of the New Zealand data collection are sufficiently similar to that gathered in Australia, we could link our data with that of our larger neighbour. This would provide New Zealand with information on trends more quickly than would be possible if we operated a completely stand-alone system,” he said.

He said the College looked forward to working with other stakeholders to further develop New Zealand’s perioperative mortality review processes. “The College’s commitment to audits of surgical mortality demonstrates an ongoing commitment to excellence on the part of its Fellows,” Mr Stevenson said.

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