



Military teamwork a model for surgeons

Thursday 10 May, 2012

Surgeons can improve their work practices by adopting some of the tenets and values of military personnel, delegates to the 81st Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told.

Professor Jeffrey Rosenfeld, a distinguished neurosurgeon at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital, told delegates that teamwork is a fundamental tenet of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and that military surgeons must live and work as cooperative team members.

Professor Rosenfeld, who holds the rank of Major-General in the ADF, said although surgeons may be leaders in civilian practice, this did not necessarily extend to the military.

"The officer commanding the surgical team may be non-medical because of their command experience and military qualifications," he said. "It is the surgeon's responsibility to advise senior commanders and members of the immediate team when it comes to technical surgical issues."

"Each member of the surgical team has a defined role and range of responsibilities and, increasingly, mission rehearsal exercises are becoming an important prelude to deployment, enabling team members to work together in simulated and real situations.

"The US military, for example, places its surgical teams on call in civilian trauma centres so they are a more cohesive team when they deploy. And the military surgical team now employed at the Royal Brisbane Hospital is ready to deploy at short notice for ADF operations," Professor Rosenfeld said.

He noted that psychological debriefing and counselling is provided to all who deploy.

"Lessons learned by teams in the military setting can be applied to operating rooms and wards in civilian hospitals. The values of the effective soldier can also be adapted for members of the civilian surgical team."

Approximately 2,500 delegates from Australia, New Zealand and around the world are attending the ASC, which runs from 6 to 10 May and is being held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

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