



6th May 2024

***Joint statement in response to the recently published case series report:
'Laparoscopic cholecystectomy performed by a surgical care practitioner: a
review of outcomes'***

The Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) and Surgical Specialty Training Organisations (SSTOs) issue this joint statement in response to the recently published case series report 'Laparoscopic cholecystectomy performed by a surgical care practitioner: a review of outcomes' (Ann R Coll Surg Engl 2024;000:1–5 doi: [10.1308/rcsann.2023.0058](https://doi.org/10.1308/rcsann.2023.0058)). This statement highlights the significant concerns raised by our members.

The above case series cannot be used to establish an extremely worrying precedent for the following reasons:

1. The operation described is outside the scope of practice of SCPs, as described in the RCSEng/RCSEd 2022 Framework (1). The complexity and potential complications of this surgery can be life threatening. This poses a clear patient safety risk. This raises significant ethical questions regarding informed consent of patients within this case series.
2. The caseload in the case series represents prime training cases for surgical trainees. The proposed expansion of scope deprives core trainees, speciality doctors and SAS doctors of index training opportunities. These doctors will ultimately become responsible for the care of patients, dealing with the most complex cases, and their training should be prioritised at all times. In this case series, training opportunities have been taken away from the consultants of tomorrow, who have instead taken the role designed for the SCPs: assisting. This is unacceptable.

3. The report ascribes rotational training as a reason for prioritising SCP training. Our [Non-Financial Cost of Training Report](#) highlights the significant negative impact of rotational training on trainees and calls for an urgent review into this. Consultant trainers, and especially Training Programme Directors, should take every opportunity to minimise the impact of rotational training on surgical trainees, and not use it as a reason to avoid training the consultant workforce of tomorrow.

ASiT and the SSTOs' aim is to promote excellence in surgical training and ultimately excellence in patient care by training the safe and competent consultants of tomorrow. ASiT and the SSTOs recognise the role of the multidisciplinary team in improving patient care. However, as highlighted by NHS Employers (2), medical associate professions (MAPs) **must not** replace doctors, and their training should not be at the expense of doctors. The considerable damage to the morale of the surgical training workforce by such practice on the backdrop of the worst operative training deficits on record cannot be overemphasised.

MAPs wishing to expand their scope of practice have an established pathway that currently exists to allow them to gain the necessary qualifications: medical school.

ASiT and the SSTOs advocate for immediate action to ensure all MAPs work within their scope of practice. We advocate for stakeholders, including: the Joint Committee on Surgical Training (JCST), NHS Workforce Training & Education, the Surgical Royal Colleges, the Confederation of Postgraduate Schools of Surgery (CoPSS) and the General Medical Council (GMC), to fight for the training of the consultant surgeons of tomorrow.

Yours faithfully,

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Marina Pitsika, President of the British Neurosurgical Trainees Association (BNTA)

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Emily Thompson, President of The Herrick Society

Thomas Hubbard, Chair of The Mammary Fold

Kellie Bateman, President of The Moynihan Academy (MA)

Adam Holden, President of the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Fellows in Training (OMFS FiT)

Katerina Kyprianou, President of the Plastic Surgery Trainees Association (PLASTA)

Benjamin Chan, President of the Roux Group

Andrew Nickinson, President of the Rouleaux Club

Walid Mohamed, UK Representative of National Trainee Committee for Cardiothoracic Surgery (NTCCTS)

Raef Jackson, ASiT Representative of Trainees in Paediatric Surgery (TriPS)

References

1. *The curriculum framework for the surgical care practitioner*. Available at: <https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/-/media/files/rcs/education-and-exams/accreditation/rcs--curriculum-framework-for-scp-2022.pdf> (Accessed: 06 May 2024).
2. *NHS employers responds to BMA guidance on the role of maps* (no date) *NHS Employers*. Available at: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/news/nhs-employers-responds-bma-guidance-role-maps> (Accessed: 06 May 2024).