



Editorial

Nurturing Excellence: Association of Surgeons in Training Annual Conference 2018 Edinburgh



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ABSTRACT

The Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT)'s motto is the pursuit of excellence in surgical training. The Association provides support to surgical trainees throughout the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. Originally founded in 1976, ASiT is independent of the National Health Service (NHS), Surgical Royal Colleges, and specialty associations. The 2018 Annual Conference in Edinburgh hosted over 800 delegates for a packed educational weekend. The conference theme was #nurturingexcellence and focused on helping trainees achieve their potential and improve surgical care. The importance of support for diversity in surgery was emphasised. An inclusive approach was fostered with a baby feeding room and a clear message that babies were welcome at the conference. Debates on the role of simulation in surgical training, sessions on reflective practice and the improving surgical training programme and a question and answer session with the presidents of the Royal colleges of surgeons made for lively and at times heated discussions. The weekend started with pre-conference courses covering a diverse range of topics including core laparoscopic, vascular, orthopaedics, neurosurgical skills, leadership, NOTSS and global surgery. Over 1000 abstract submissions were received and there were over 30 prize winning submissions. ASiT continues to grow and we look forward to an even larger and more successful international conference next year in Belfast 22nd-24th March, with an exciting parallel Hackathon to foster cross specialty cooperation to solve surgical problems.

1. Introduction

The Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) is a professional body and registered charity working to promote excellence in surgical training for the benefit of junior doctors and patients alike. The Association provides support at both regional and national levels throughout the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. Originally founded in 1976, ASiT is independent of the National Health Service (NHS), Surgical Royal Colleges, and specialty associations. The 2018 ASiT conference in Edinburgh was our largest to date, with 800 delegates.

The theme of nurturing excellence was chosen as it is recognised that there is a significant need for pastoral support of trainees during surgical training, to allow them to achieve their potential and enable them to be the best surgeons they can be. The care which we deliver should be excellent, and training programmes must strive to prepare trainees to be excellent surgeons rather than just adequate. Indeed, surgical trainees are in a unique position at the frontlines of surgical care to recognise inconsistencies and promote quality improvement [1]. Supporting trainees is essential for patient safety and surgeon morale.

Edinburgh provided a stunning backdrop for 3 days jam packed with surgical education, cooperation and learning which left delegates feeling refreshed and invigorated to return to their medical schools, clinical and academic jobs. The night before the conference commenced, RCSEdinburgh held a “Future of Surgery” event in Edinburgh, which focused on innovation and new technology, and fitted in well

with our conference theme of nurturing excellence.

Again, a record number of abstracts were received with over 1000 received, and there were over 30 prizes for trainees to compete for [1]. As the only pan-specialty UK and Ireland trainee meeting, ASiT continues to develop and we look forward to an even better international conference in Belfast next year with a theme of “Innovation in surgical practice”.

2. Preconference courses

The preconference courses were split between the International Convention Centre and the historic Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. They covered a broad range of technical and non-technical skills, reflecting the holistic surgeon that is required of today. The courses were run in partnership with our sister specialty trainee groups, with support of senior faculty who generously gave their time.

The Non-Operative Technical Skills course (NOTSS) was popular as ever, with delegates learning important skills in human factors and cognitive simulation, with faculty from RCSEdinburgh. The Research Skills course took on a new approach focusing on collaborative research, with trainees developing ideas for collaborative projects in small groups before pitching them to the “Dragons” at the end of the day, including RCS President Derek Alderson. The Global Surgery Course changed format this year from a practical course to a more discursive course with GASOC focusing on exploring the wider ethical and practical issues around global surgery intervention including sus-

tainability and audit, with a truly multidisciplinary focus. Prof. David Galloway, then President of RCSPGlasgow generously gave his time to teach at this course and share his extensive experience of global surgery having recently returned from Malawi.

Hands on courses included the vascular skills course with the Rouleaux Club which was a technical masterclass in vascular anastomosis, the ASiT Orthopaedic course with faculty provided by BOTA, our sister orthopaedic trainee organisation, the ASiT Core Neurosurgical Skills course with our partner trainee group BNTA (see Fig. 1), and the

excellent training is essential for excellent patient care, with the two having a synergistic relationship. She reflected on the ups and downs of a surgical career and the need to support trainees with “extra nurturing” through the dips and the challenging times, in order to prevent attrition and ensure trainees achieve their potential. She welcomed delegates and faculty, with a special welcome for our international guest, immediate past vice-president of the American College of Surgeons Prof. Hilary Sanfey. She also discussed ASiT’s baby feeding room at conference this year-although this was the second year we had



Fig. 1. ASiT Neurosurgical Skills Course.

ASiT Cardiothoracics course with the SCTS which gave trainees hands on experience of coronary anastomosis using animal tissue, and the Urology course with SURG which gave trainees hands on urology experience.

The core laparoscopic skills course which was held in RCSEdinburgh and provided useful training in laparoscopic skills including laparoscopic cholecystectomy, with faculty from ASiT, and Roux group (formerly known as AUGIST) and Dukes Club.

Together, these courses had a strong emphasis on the holistic skills required of a surgeon and were an example of nurturing excellence in practice. Following the courses, there was a lovely drinks reception supported by RCS England which gave delegates an opportunity to unwind, relax and network with other trainees and senior consultants.

3. Conference main programme

The conference main programme opened with the Presidential address by ASiT President Helen Mohan. She discussed some of the challenges facing surgical trainees, particularly in the light of the Bawa-Garba case, and how these challenges emphasised the need to nurture and support trainees to deliver excellent care. She reiterated that

a feeding room, this time we advertised it more so that trainees knew their babies were welcome and that ASiT is an inclusive family friendly conference. Hopefully more conferences will follow suit and this will become the norm.

Prof. Mike Lavelle-Jones of the Edinburgh college then provided a warm Scottish welcome to Edinburgh, and highlighted some local gems and attractions that people may wish to explore while visiting this wonderful city. Prof. Hilary Sanfey then gave an excellent talk on helping trainees achieve their potential, focusing on initiatives of the American College of Surgeons and some strategies used in her experience of resident education. A key theme was the need for mentorship and guidance.

This then led onto the lively Meet the Presidents session, where we were joined by the Presidents of all four Royal Colleges of Surgeons (Prof. Hyland RCSI, Prof. Mike Lavelle-Jones, RCSEd, Prof. David Galloway, RCPG, Prof. Derek Alderson, RCSEng), and Prof Hilary Sanfey from the American College of Surgeons (see Fig. 2). Live questions and questions via the conference app were welcomed from all delegates and the Presidents responded to a variety of pertinent and challenging questions, including questions about the cost of training, the JCST fee, reflective practice, Winter Pressures and Bawa-Garba [2].



Fig. 2. Meet the Presidents.

Efforts to improve diversity and support trainees throughout their careers was also discussed. Having the USA perspective gave a unique slant to this year's session.

The next session continued with the theme of Nurturing Excellence and was “Defining Excellence and Optimising Performance”, and focused on the different sides to the holistic surgeon. Firstly, Ms. Rachel Hargest as the 2017 ASiT Swann Morton Silver Scalpel winner spoke about the “Surgeon Trainer” [3]. Her talk brought home the need for excellence, and interestingly she highlighted the gradual erosion of the term excellence and its replacement by competence in surgical education ... she asked the pertinent question, is competence enough? Ms. Stella Vig then gave an insight from the “wrong side of the curtain”, as she talked about her experience as “The Surgeon Patient” after undergoing surgery for an acoustic neuroma earlier in the year. She had invaluable insights from both sides of the curtain. Ms Juliette Murray spoke about “The Surgeon Manager-why we need to “own it””, focusing on her experience of quality improvement and developing an excellent clinical and training experience in her hospital. Prof Des Winter spoke on “The Surgeon Scientist” in a truly lateral thinking talk that challenged us to look beyond the current horizons and embrace discovery and scientific quest. Finally, Ms Deirdre Nally presented ASiT work on the ARCP process, highlighting the need for a pastoral and career development aspect with a face to face component using the results of the ASiT ARCP survey.

This was followed by a networking lunch where trainees had the opportunity to interact with sponsors, and to meet other trainees and consultant surgeons at the trade exhibition.

A key feature of the day was the session “Nurturing Excellence-when it really matters. ASiT/KCI Civilian Trauma Symposium.” This session was generously sponsored by KCI and provided trainees with the opportunity to hear different perspectives on managing civilian trauma, from seasoned trauma surgeons to trainees who found themselves on the front lines managing horrific trauma after the Manchester terror attack. Dr. S. Tawqeer Rashid spoke about “surgical triage for

multi-site and multi-disciplinary team working: when one hospital is not enough”. Ms. Joanna Shepherd from the Royal London hospital who is a trauma fellow (PhD candidate) gave the trainee perspective on trauma training, Mr. Adam Brooks the lead dean for the major trauma TIG gave the trainers perspective on training for major trauma, Mr. Martin Griffiths spoke about the London experience of the London terror attacks while Ms Charlotte Melling gave a moving talk on her experience as a trainee managing victims of the Manchester attacks. This session emphasised the need for excellent technical and non-technical skills, with the human factors including communication and team management every bit as important as hands on operative skills. The session was jam-packed and there were not many dry eyes left in the auditorium by the end of the talks.

The next session was “Nurturing Excellence- Optimising Trainee Trainer Contact Time-the IST Pilot”. This focused on the upcoming improving Surgical Training pilot, which has since recruited and commenced its first batch of core trainees in general surgery. Mr. Craig McIlhenny discussed plans to train the trainers, while Gareth Griffiths spoke about protecting the non-pilot trainees. Ian Eardley gave the “Perspective from the college board” and Ms Farah Bhatti spoke about why choose a career in surgery. This was followed by a question and answer session where trainees got to ask important questions like will the end point of training be the same, which the panel confirmed it would be.

The day concluded with the “JCST/ISCP QA Session: Nurturing Excellence in Reflection” where JCST/ISCP and the GMC were challenged to provide clear guidance or protection for trainee's reflections in the wake of issues highlighted by the Bawa-Garba case. Dr Colin Melville, Director of Education with the GMC, Prof Jon Lund, head of ISCP and Dr. Christine Bradford, medico-legal advisor from the MDU, were on hand to answer tough and insightful questions. This was followed by the ASiT AGM.

Sunday opened with the “Battle of the Medical Student Surgical Societies”, which was the first time ASiT have held this event. We

invited surgical societies from around the UK and Ireland to submit proposals for an event to be run locally during the year and the top three entries (Swansea, Exeter and Edinburgh) got to pitch their ideas to the main auditorium, with the winning entry securing £500 towards their event. Exeter medical student society won with their plan to run a southwest undergraduate plastic surgery conference. This was followed by the prestigious ASiT medal presentations, and then a talk on Global Surgery from Dr. James Glasbey.

The Nurturing Excellence- Equality and Diversity session focused on gender equality with talks from Ms. Ailín Rogers about the Pregnant Surgeon, Prof. Debbie McNamara about changing culture, Ms. Lorna Marson on peer coaching to optimise performance and Prof. Hilary Sanfey on the work of the Association of Women Surgeons and the American College of Surgeons in promoting gender equality. Ms. Oroog Ali presented ASiT's work showing that pregnant trainees do not feel adequately supported based on ASiT survey data (in press).

The Nurturing Excellence career transitions session focused on the most challenging times in a surgical career in many ways-moving from one grade to the next. Mr. Peter Sagar gave a chilling but very relevant talk on medicolegal pitfalls and how to avoid them, Dr. Sarah Hallet gave the BMA perspective on supporting doctors in career transitions, Steve Hornby spoke on preparing for day 1 consultant from FY1 and Ms Aileen McKinley gave a very useful talk on getting onto ST3.

After another networking lunch, the next plenary session was on Nurturing Excellence: from academia to clinical practice. Ewen Harrison spoke about peer review, Matt Lee about ASiT's work on recognition of collaborative research [4], Prof Lynda De Cossart spoke about professionalism and surgery and Abdulhakim Zaggut spoke about Surgery in Conflict-the David Nott Foundation, the 2018 ASiT conference charity.

Similar to previous ASiT conferences, the debate was a highlight [5–8]. This years debate was entitled “Simulation is not the answer to training”. Mr. Steve Hornby and Ms. Christina Fleming argued in favour of the motion, but despite valiant arguments were defeated by Ms. Stella Vig and Ms. Rebecca Nicholls who argued that simulation was essential. Finally there was the SARS prize presentations with excellent presentations, and then the prize giving presentations and Closing Address by Ms. Gemma Humm the incoming ASiT President who gave an inspiring speech pledging to support trainees over the coming year.

4. Parallel sessions

Parallel sessions on Saturday commenced with three really popular sessions: the STARSurg medical student oral presentation prize, truly an example of nurturing excellence right the way from medical school, and the Speciality Village where medical students and trainees got to meet representatives from all ten surgical specialties to discuss career advice and the member spotlight session on Burnout by Georgia Layton. This year was the first time we introduced member spotlight sessions, where members were invited to submit proposals for breakout sessions and the top ranking submissions after peer review were then invited to run their breakout session at conference. Burnout was overflowing with attendees, highlighting the relevance of this topic for the surgical community.

This was followed by the “Rejected Paper Clinic” where trainees got to meet the editors and engage in round table discussions with leading journal editors including Prof. Derek Alderson, Ms. Rachel Hargest and Prof. Des Winter on why papers are rejected and how to improve them.

This again was very popular.

The next member spotlight session was on Transgender and non-binary patients on surgery, a very relevant topic, while the ASiT/ISTG (Irish Surgical Training Group) session had inspiring talks on the theme of ‘My Best Day’. A range of Irish and International speakers from aspiring trainees to Consultants and Professors (Marliza O'Dwyer, Joshua Clements, Antonio Sampaio Soares, Ailin Rogers and Prof Debbie McNamara) participated and provided motivation to sustain trainees during the pursuit of excellence. Prof McNamara coining the phrase #humblebrag which might be plagiarized in future! The National Research Collaborative Session focused on “the rounded researcher” in an interactive fashion.

The ESSQ prize session surgical education prize then followed along with the ESSQ session, and the NIHR Surgical Med Tech Cooperative who ran a session on how trainees can get involved in novel health technologies.

Sundays parallel sessions commenced with a consensus session with representatives from ASiT/BOTA and JCST following the ASiT/BOTA/JCST Morale and Bullying Survey. This tackled key questions on action points on how to address bullying in the workplace, essential if we are to nurture excellence. The prestigious ASGBI prize ran at the same time, with high class presentations, followed by the ASiT grants and bursaries session where prize winners of bursaries during the year presented, e.g. the Shoring-Hosking Operation Hernia bursary. The STARSurg parallel session also ran alongside focusing on medical student involvement in research.

The emergency general surgery roundtable was a member spotlight session focusing on clinical skills in emergency general surgery presentations, focusing on difficult clinical decisions and scenarios. The ASiT/TMS poster of distinction prize ran parallel to this. The final ASiT member spotlight session was a thought provoking session on ethics and surgery.

The ASiT/pastest medical student parallel session convened by Ms. Praveena Deekonda included talks on surgical training pathways, the academic foundation in surgery, “My toughest case as a trainee”, delivered by former ASiT President Adam Williams, followed by a surgery mini-quiz.

Finally, there were 3 parallel sessions to close the conference-the medical student poster of distinction prize session, the BASO trainees oral presentation prize and the RCS Quality improvement parallel session.

5. Gala dinner

The Gala dinner was generously sponsored by RCSEdinburgh and held in the beautiful setting of the Edinburgh college. The historic Playfair Hall was the setting for the drinks reception, followed by the meal in the beautifully lit Wolfson Hall, followed by dancing and celidh into the wee hours in the historic backdrop of the college. Prof. Mike-Lavelle Jones as a previous Silver Scalpel winner presented the Silver Scalpel to this years winner, Ms. Stella Vig, who gave a gracious speech at the dinner on receipt of her prize. This year for the first time we ran a “trainee trainer of the year”- the Silver Suture, recognising the trainee who was the best trainer to peers and juniors. The inaugural winner of the award was Emma Stewart-Parker, who as it turned out quite fittingly had been a trainee of Ms. Stella Vig, emphasising that excellence produces excellence (see Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Silver Scalpel and Silver Suture Winner.

6. Next year

The 2019 ASiT conference will be in Belfast International Conference Centre from Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th March. We will also be holding a 48-h Hackathon in parallel to conference on the 22nd-23rd March in Belfast bringing together a diverse group of healthcare professionals, engineers, computer science and technology to foster collaboration towards solving the most pressing issues within surgery.

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Helen Mohan Wrote the first draft of the paper.

Adam Williams Study design, and contributed to writing and edited the paper.

Gemma Humm Contributed to writing and edited the paper.

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Sharing data is not relevant for this editorial. Authors are happy to provide a copy of the conference programme on request.

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