

Empowering trainers

David O'Regan reports on the Faculty of Surgical Trainers conference, which called for better recognition and rewards for trainers



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The Faculty of Surgical Trainers (FST) welcomed more than 60 enthusiastic trainers to its annual meeting on Friday 25 October 2019 at the Studio in Birmingham. This was supported by the College's Vice-President, Mr Pala Rajesh. It was an excellent meeting that brought together a diverse group of education enthusiasts to discuss important issues and developments in training.

It was clear from both the formal and informal discussions that there is a lack of recognition of the value of a good surgical trainer on many levels. Although the attributes and behaviours of a good trainer are defined, and many tools are available in the system, many are poorly used or understood by the trainer, and there are few opportunities to develop and grow as a trainer, especially for trainees interested in becoming trainers.

The discussions around professionalism focused on recognition of teaching as a formal role that should have equal standing and recognition as academia. Many agreed that this requires time and space. Imagine a future where advertised consultant posts specify the need for a surgical trainer. Likewise, imagine a future where good surgical trainers are recognised and rewarded by Trusts. This is the vision of the Faculty of Surgical Trainers and we are beginning an exciting journey.

Above right:
The College's
Vice-President,
Mr Pala Rajesh



The opening debate, 'Run-through Training – Yay (Alex Cope) or Nay (Aimee Charnell)', set the standard. The most interesting observation was the predominant feeling, before and after the debate, that run-through training should not be the only route.

Improving Surgical Training (IST) was presented by Dan Beral and Ian Eardley. The IST pilots have had some successes with protected training in job plans, improved balance between service and training, and trainee satisfaction with the stability and security of run-through training.

IST is exploring competence-based training and the use of enhanced simulation. Emerging critical success factors include rota gaps, and the availability and

use of the extended surgical team. Time allocation and PAs, as well as trainer commitment, are also issues.

Act It Out by the British Orthopaedic Trainees' Association reminded the audience that 'microaggressions' and frustrations can have an impact on the learning experience. The message was clear: trainees would like to be treated like colleagues but are concerned by excessive workloads and the lack of firm structure. There are significant service and management pressures.

The breakout sessions identified parts of the system that could be improved to help the trainer and there was enthusiasm for the development of a bespoke multisource 360° feedback tool.



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Many have signed up to a workgroup to explore, test and try this as a development tool.

An FST ASME grant award winner, Joshil Lodhia, presented his work on low-fidelity banana models that can differentiate between an expert and a learner.

The first FST medal was presented to Rachel Hargest, who went on to challenge current thinking about training and compared the UK and US models – passive versus active. She proposed we should consider the training of surgeons with a view to excellence and running a surgical practice, with the application of knowledge and skills rather than set-piece and task-based competencies. There is something to be said about morning ward rounds with consultants and learning as a firm. Are we missing the opportunity to teach some of the nuances of consultant practice because we do not treat trainees as colleagues?

Helen Mohan reminded us that combining training with motherhood is more than a challenge on many levels. Moreover, 27% of trainees felt negative about their training after ARCP.

Gael Maclean introduced the first of many CUTS (Concepts Underpinning Training and Support) lectures. She described how situated learning with legitimate peripheral participation can be used in the operating theatre.

James Tomlinson and Roger Kirby spoke about professionalisation of the trainer. They argued that the professional trainer should be pulling in the trainee by listening, understanding and offering pastoral care. They understand that technical skills are vital, teamworking essential, and we should be teaching trainees to think and act strategically. Emotional intelligence is crucial.

The day stimulated discussion, highlighted needs, gave direction and asked more questions. Some in the audience have followed this by asking how they can join the FST.

Next year's meeting on communication will be on 19 October 2020 at the College. Visit fst.rcsed.ac.uk for further information