Association of surgeons in training 40th anniversary conference: Liverpool #ASiT2016

ABSTRACT

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 patient alike. ASiT is independent of the National Health Service (NHS), Surgical Royal Colleges and specialty associations, and represents trainees in all ten surgical specialities. We were delighted to be celebrating our 40th Anniversary Conference in the fantastic city of Liverpool with over 700 delegates in attendance and in the company of many ASiT Past Presidents. The conference programme focused on how to overcome threats to training in light of the recent turbulent events associated with the junior doctor contract dispute with inspiring talks from Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, NHS Medical Director and Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, Shadow Health Secretary. The other central topic to the conference was 'celebrating excellence in surgical training' and we were thankful to many other high profile speakers who attended to help in this celebration. In addition, over £4000 was distributed between more than 30 prizes and was awarded by the incoming President, Mr Adam Williams, to delegates who presented the highest scoring academic work from over 1200 submitted abstracts.

1. Introduction

As the only pan-speciality national conference for surgical trainees in the UK and Ireland, the Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) annual meeting offers a unique opportunity for clinical up-dates, training courses, research presentations and careers talks specifically aimed at surgical trainees [1,2]. Combined with numerous prizes, a Charity Gala Dinner and the opportunity to socialise and network with colleagues from across the country, the weekend has become an essential date in the diary for all surgical trainees.

2. Liverpool

The friendly city of Liverpool, home of the Beatles and the Grand National and the 2008 European city of culture, was chosen as the host of #ASiT2016. The Liverpool Arena and Conference Centre with its waterfront location and welcoming staff was the perfect setting to celebrate ASiT’s 40 year history. The conference packaged a weekend of updates in surgical training, education, festivities, reminiscence and forward thinking.

ASiT was honoured that Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, Shadow Health Secretary, opened the celebratory drinks reception with a thought-provoking speech focusing on the UK Government/junior doctors’ contract dispute and women as leaders (see Fig. 4). We were delighted to be joined by many ASiT Past Presidents for the prestigious occasion, including many previous Royal College Office Bearers and medical education leaders (see Fig. 3).

Over 1200 abstracts were submitted, with 500 of the highest quality abstracts accepted for oral and poster presentations, allowing trainees to showcase their research, with a chance to win one of over 30 trainee presentation prizes. With over 700 delegates and a strong social media presence, #ASiT2016 was trending on Twitter within two hours of opening.
3. Pre-conference courses

The weekend began with ASiT’s pre-conference courses; low-cost, high-yield environments to practise the skills necessary for a career in surgery. We held 12 this year, all of which received excellent feedback and were highly recommended by delegate. The courses on offer were the Statistics for Surgeons Course, Research Skills Course, Medtronic Core Laparoscopic Skills Course, Basic Neurosurgical Skills Course, Basic Vascular Skills Course, RCSed Non Technical Skills Course, Gore Endovascular Skills Course, Basic Cardiothoracic Skills Course, Stryker Basic Orthopaedic Skills Course, GE Ultrasound Course, THD/BK Ultrasound Proctology Course and Cook Complex Abdominal Closure Course.

4. Celebrating excellence in surgical training

This year’s theme for the 40th Anniversary conference was ‘celebrating excellence in surgical training’ however given the turbulent times of 2015/16 it somewhat changed to ‘overcoming threats to surgical training’. Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, Medical Director for NHS England, inspired trainees in his conference opening talk: ‘you are our best agents for change and promoting quality across the NHS’. He reminded us that we may work all over the country, but when people work together and function to common goals, we can achieve more.

As always, ASiT was privileged to host the Presidents and Office Bearers of all four Surgical Royal Colleges for the ever popular ‘Presidents Question Time’ (see Fig. 1). Speakers were asked to justify the College Membership and JCST fees, remind us of the College roles in training and education, and uplift spirits in a time of low morale. Mr Lavelle-Jones, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, ended the session with the words ‘... don’t forget, that it’s a truly great job’. We couldn’t agree more.

Mr John Black, Past ASiT President and Past President of The Royal College of Surgeons of England gave the ASiT Lecture; a lecture full of candour entitled ‘Learning From the Past’. He summarised it rather well too; ‘... don’t make the same mistakes again!’ Miss Elizabeth Ball, a breast surgeon who is fighting breast cancer moved the whole audience to tears in her heart rendering talk on what it is like to be a patient. Have you ever appreciated how it feels to be in a waiting room, waiting to see a cancer specialist?

After lunch, we welcomed the leaders of UK surgical training to join in a panel discussion on ‘Making the most of our surgical training’ covering pertinent topics such as flexible training, trainee appraisal processes and credentialing.

Dr Johann Malawana, Chair of the BMA Junior Doctors Committee, updated trainees on the progress of the much discussed
imposition of junior doctor contracts; Professor Stephen Cannon spoke about cosmetic surgery credentialing, Professor Steven Wit-aby spoke about the negatives of surgeon specific-outcomes, and Professor Danny Kennan about the importance of high quality data in reporting surgeon specific outcomes.

Day two of the conference saw the session ‘It’s a Man’s World ... Or Is it?’ Opened by the UK’s first female Professor of Surgery, Professor Averil Mansfield, followed by Cardiothoracic Surgeon Professor Farah Bhatti. Prof Bhatti prepared a video talk with @LoggeMD, the Californian surgeon who started #ILookLikeASurgeon, breaking gender stereotypes. Consultant Breast Surgeon Ms Clare Murphy told us how we can successfully train less-than full-time; a pathway which ASiT fully supports [3].

In the conflict and catastrophes session, delegates heard about war-zone healthcare from Lt Col Niall Martin, working in Ebola-hit Sierra Leone from Mr Janso Padickakudi, and the medical management of 7/7 bombings disaster from Dr Andrew Hartle, President of the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland.

We spend our training preparing for life as a consultant, and we had therefore titled a session as such. Professor Des Winter spoke about spotting the sick patient, Mr Goldie Khera (ASiT Past President) spoke about Academic Surgery. Advice on managing the managers was delivered by Mr Tim Archer (ASiT Past President) and Mr Geoffrey Glazer (Chair of the Federation of Independent Practitioner Organisation) enlightened us about private practice.

The prestigious ASiT Medal was awarded to Ms Esther Campbell for her presentation entitled ‘The combined endocrine receptor (CER) is a better discriminator of patient outcome than ER and PR alone’.

6. Parallel sessions

Over the weekend, two parallel consensus sessions took place on training opportunities in Global Surgery and research training requirements in surgical training. Thoughts were collated and transcribed into position statements. Watch out for these in a journal soon! Each collaborator will be cited as a searchable author, just like our consensus statement from #ASiT2015 on the future of training in emergency general surgery [4]. Other parallel sessions included the GlobalSurg, STARSurg and Medical Student Parallel Sessions, which were highly rated by our delegates.

7. Gala dinner

The 40th Anniversary ‘wow factor’ was certainly achieved with the location for this years gala dinner venue in the breath-taking Crypt Hall in the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. Attendees dined in candle-light and danced the night away to the brilliant ‘Pleural Tap’ band. The ASiT Charity Gala Dinner was held in aid of BFIRST (www.bfirst.org.uk), a charity which trains reconstructive techniques to surgeons in low and middle income countries.

8. Sponsors

The conference would not have been possible without all of the sponsors who help to make the conference affordable for trainees, especially our Diamond Sponsors, Medtronic; Platinum Sponsors, Ethicon; and Silver Sponsors, Cook, The MDU and Wesleyan.

#ASiT2017 will be held in the sunny seaside town of Bournemouth, 31st March -2nd April, organised by the 2016/17 President, Mr Adam Williams.

8.1. Online resources

Selected sessions from ASiT conferences are recorded on video and are available to watch online here: https://www.asit.org/resources/past-asit-conferences/2016-asit-conference/res1232.


Photographs from the conference are available to view here: https://www.asit.org/resources/past-asit-conferences/2016-asit-conference/res1232.

Conflict of interest

The authors are current surgical trainees and elected members of the executive committee of the Association of Surgeons in Training. The authors have no other relevant financial or personal

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conflicts of interest to declare in relation to this paper.

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References


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1 www.asit.org.
2 https://twitter.com/ASITofficial@ASITofficial.