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### Editorial

## Association of Surgeons in Training Conference: Cardiff 2012<sup>☆</sup>

#### Keywords:

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Surgery  
Workforce  
Conference



#### 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 patients alike. With a membership of over 2000 surgical trainees from all ten surgical specialities, 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 speciality associations. The 2012 Annual Conference in Cardiff City Hall brought together nearly 700 delegates for an educational weekend programme with expert guest speakers. Clinical updates were complimented by debates on current training in surgery, and the weekend included 6 pre-conference courses covering a diverse range of topics including laparoscopic skills, surgical drawing and a masterclass in journal club. A record number of 1168 abstract submissions were received and those successful competed for 18 awards representing £3500 in trainee prizes and bursaries. As the only national surgical trainee meeting for all specialities, ASiT continues to grow and we look forward to an even larger and more successful conference next year.

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### 1. Conference report

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. Combined with numerous prizes, a Charity Gala Dinner and the opportunity to socialise with colleagues from across the country, the weekend has become an essential date in the diary for all surgical trainees. [Figs. 1–8](#)

Following on from the success of last year's meeting in Sheffield,<sup>1</sup> this year Cardiff City Hall played host to nearly 700 delegates from the UK and overseas. With a record number of 1168 abstract submissions, the conference offered an excellent forum for presenting trainee audit and research work. The trends over recent years, together with the abstract submission categories are detailed in [Table 1](#). Following a rigorous peer-review process, the highest scoring abstracts were accepted for poster presentations, with the best selected for presentation in one of the four oral prize presentation sessions.

In total, over £3500 in prizes, grants and bursaries were available for the best conference trainee and medical student

presentations. Numerous surgical associations, charities and companies have joined together with ASiT and other surgical speciality trainee associations to sponsor these, and all offer a prestigious addition to a surgeon's curriculum vitae. Details of these awards are provided in [Table 2](#).

Pre-conference courses started the meeting on Friday, in advance of the main plenary sessions on Saturday and Sunday. As ever, these popular courses offered great value-for-money and covered a broad range of topics useful for trainees at all levels. We are grateful to the work of the course convenors in organising these, who are listed in [Table 3](#).

The pre-conference course day finished with a Welcome Reception in the grand setting of the Marble Hall at Cardiff City Hall. All Royal College of Surgeons Presidents were invited to attend and address delegates informally, and we were delighted that Professor Norman Williams from the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSEng) accepted. A light-hearted welcome speech was followed by drinks and canapés, and a string-quartet provided a suitably grand accompaniment to the occasion.

Following a warm welcome from Mr Goldie Khera (Surgical Registrar and ASiT President 2011–2012), Saturday morning saw the start of the main conference, and programme highlights are listed in [Table 4](#). Dr Stephanie Brown (Director of Policy, Communications and Marketing at the Medical Protection Society) began with an entertaining and informative talk discussing her experience of representing surgeons involved in complaints and litigation. Details of these cases concentrated the mind and some

<sup>☆</sup> The ASiT Conference was held in Cardiff City Hall on Friday 23 – Sunday 25 March 2012.



Fig. 1. Cardiff City Hall proved an excellent setting for the 2012 ASIT Conference.



Fig. 3. Professor Norman Williams, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, chats informally with conference delegates at the welcome drinks reception.

useful tips were provided. The second talk of the opening session was provided by Alison Cook (Director of Policy and Communications at the Royal College of Surgeons of England) who provided a fascinating insight into the modern world of managing the media and politicians in order to better represent surgery and surgeons.

Question time with the Presidents of the Royal Surgical Colleges provided one of the most interactive and inflammatory conference sessions of 2012. Once again Mr David Tolley, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, was unfortunately unable to attend and was represented by his Vice-President, leading to some joking from his Fellow President, Mr Ian Anderson from the

Glasgow College, as to whether he was brave enough to attend what many would consider to be a lion's den! Each Royal College representative was invited to start the session with a brief presentation describing their College's activities, particularly for trainees. There followed a question-and-answer session covering a diverse range of hot topics including the use of the title 'Consultant Surgeon' by non-medically qualified podiatrists, the European Working Time Directive, and some horizon-gazing regarding future problems in surgical training.

The Swann-Morton Silver Scalpel Award session hosted last year's winner, Mr Gavin Pettigrew (Consultant Transplant Surgeon, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge) in a key-note address on his vision of excellence in surgical training.

From training, surgical practice then took centre stage with two cutting-edge up-dates. Professor Philip Wai Yan Chiu from the Chinese University of Hong Kong provided an excellent review of advancements in robotics and endoluminal surgery, while Mr Gordon McFarlane from Lerwick in the Shetland Islands discussed the unique practice of the remote and rural surgeon.

Following lunch and poster presentation judging, the afternoon sessions commenced with two inspirational and motivational speakers. Tori James became the first ever Welsh woman to climb Mount Everest at the age of 25 and starred in the BBC documentary "On Top of the World". She presented the eye-opening story of her



Fig. 2. Delegates had the opportunity to participate in numerous educational pre-conference courses.



Fig. 4. Professor Philip Wai Yan Chiu from the Chinese University of Hong Kong addressed the conference on recent advancements in robotics and endoluminal surgery.



**Fig. 5.** The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama was a stunning venue for the Charity Gala Dinner Party in aid of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund.



**Fig. 6.** Delegates had the opportunity to visit over 27 exhibitors at the conference.

journey, overcoming the obstacles of sponsorship and mother-nature to achieve her goals. An equally enthralling talk from former ASiT Council member Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Catherine Doran (Royal Navy) provided a detailed account of surgery on the front line in Afghanistan together with the difficulties of providing this in such a challenging environment.

The Ansell ASiT Medal oral prize presentation session hosted the highest scoring abstract submissions of the conference, with some excellent reports of high-impact surgical research. Following this, the winner of the 2011 Covidien ASiT Fellowships and the Elsevier Medical Student Elective prize presented their experiences.

The afternoon concluded with the ASiT Debate: “How can we measure the quality of surgical training?” Mr Ian Eardley (Chair of the JCST), Mr Raj Aggarwal (National Institute of Health Research Clinician Scientist, Imperial College London), Sue Woodward (Chair, Patient Liaison Group, RCoSoc) and Mr Ed Fitzgerald (Surgical Registrar and ASiT Past-President) spoke in turn, with an interesting debate following.



**Fig. 7.** The Council of the Association of Surgeons in Training 2011–2012.

**Table 1**  
Trends in abstract submission to the ASiT Conference.

| Abstract submission Category     | Hull 2010  | Sheffield 2011 | Cardiff 2012 |
|----------------------------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| Basic science including anatomy  | 14         | 18             | 21           |
| Breast surgery                   | 30         | 43             | 60           |
| Cardiothoracic surgery           | 21         | 11             | 26           |
| Case reports                     | 87         | 109            | 121          |
| Coloproctology                   | 59         | 76             | 87           |
| Endocrine surgery                | 5          | 13             | 12           |
| ENT surgery                      | 43         | 73             | 76           |
| Hepatopancreatobiliary           | 21         | 20             | 26           |
| Maxillofacial surgery            | 8          | 11             | 7            |
| Miscellaneous surgery            | 55         | 71             | 110          |
| Neurosurgery                     | 5          | 13             | 18           |
| Orthopaedics                     | 85         | 99             | 141          |
| Paediatric surgery               | 7          | 15             | 11           |
| Plastic surgery                  | 28         | 31             | 52           |
| Surgical training and education  | 80         | 111            | 160          |
| Transplant surgery               | 3          | 6              | 8            |
| Trauma/Emergency surgery         | 29         | 44             | 62           |
| Upper-gastrointestinal surgery   | 29         | 40             | 40           |
| Urology                          | 40         | 37             | 69           |
| Vascular/Endovascular surgery    | 55         | 89             | 61           |
| <b>Total abstracts submitted</b> | <b>704</b> | <b>930</b>     | <b>1168</b>  |

Note: Abstracts undergo anonymous peer review by a minimum of three reviewers, with only the highest marked (under 50%) accepted for presentation.

Saturday evening saw the social highlight of the weekend, with over 200 delegates and guests attending the Charity Gala Dinner Party at the stunning new Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. The 2012 dinner was held in aid of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund (RMBF) and their President, Dame Deirdre Hine, was guest of honour. The Charity Gala Dinner raffle raised £1,000 for the RMBF in their 175th anniversary year. Following a drinks reception with magicians and a string quartet, a wonderful Welsh-themed four course dinner with wines was served in the new architect-designed atrium. All nominees for the Swann–Morton Silver Scalpel Award attended as guests and were presented with certificates to recognise their contributions to surgical training; their details are provided in Table 5. The 2012 prize winner was Mr Humphrey Scott and Dame Hine also presented the ASiT Outstanding Contribution Award to Mr David O'Regan, Consultant Cardiothoracic surgeon in Leeds, founder of the Silver Scalpel Award founder and Past ASiT

**Table 2**  
ASiT Conference Surgical Trainee Research & Audit Prizes.

|  |
|--|
| <b>Pan-Speciality Oral Presentation Prizes</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ansell ASiT Medal</li> <li>• SARS ASiT Academic &amp; Research Surgery Prize</li> <li>• ASGBI ASiT Short Paper Prize</li> <li>• Ethicon ASiT Surgical Education Prize</li> <li>• Elsevier ASiT Medical Student Prize</li> </ul> |
| <b>Pan-Speciality Poster Presentation Prizes</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCSEng/ASiT Poster Presentation Prize</li> <li>• International Journal of Surgery Case Report Prizes</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Surgical Speciality Trainee Prizes</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orthopaedic Research UK Prize</li> <li>• BASO ~ The Association of Cancer Surgery Prize</li> <li>• AUGIS Trainee Prize</li> <li>• ALSGBI Trainee Prize</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Speciality Trainee Group Prizes</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASiT-Rouleaux Club Prize</li> <li>• ASiT-AOT Prize</li> <li>• ASiT-SURG Prize</li> <li>• ASiT-PLASTA Prize</li> <li>• ASiT-Dukes' Club/ACPGBI Prize</li> <li>• ASiT-Mammary Fold Prize</li> <li>• ASiT-BNTA Prize</li> </ul>    |

Note: Prize winners are highlighted in the published abstracts section of this supplement.

**Table 3**  
Educational pre-conference courses.

|   |
|---|
| <b>ASiT/BOTA Foundation Skills in Surgery Course</b>                |
| <i>Course convenor: Mr Joe Shaloub</i>                              |
| <b>ASiT/SARS/BJs Research Skills Course</b>                         |
| <i>Course convenor: Mr Vimal Gokani</i>                             |
| <b>ASiT/Covidien Core Laparoscopic Skills Course</b>                |
| <i>Course convenor: Mr Steve Hornby</i>                             |
| <b>Masterclass in Journal Club/FRCS Academic viva course</b>        |
| <i>Course convenors: Mr Ajay Sharma and Mr Saba Balasubramanian</i> |
| <b>ASiT GI Surgical Stapling and Energised Dissection Course</b>    |
| <i>Course convenors: Mr Thomas Hall and Mr Dhya Al-Leswas</i>       |
| <b>ASiT Surgical Art Workshop</b>                                   |
| <i>Course convenor: Mr Paul Malone</i>                              |

**Table 4**  
Key programmes highlights.

|   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cutting Edge: The science behind your surgical training</li> <li>• Future focus: Robotics and endoluminal surgery</li> <li>• Speciality update: Remote and rural surgery</li> <li>• ASiT Lecture: Surgical Research Collaboratives – the reality</li> <li>• Question Time with Surgical Royal College Presidents</li> <li>• Safe surgical practice: how to keep out of jail!</li> <li>• Applying for surgical training: what factors are important?</li> <li>• Career focus: the surgical trainee at war</li> <li>• ASiT Debate: How can we measure the quality of surgical training?</li> <li>• International Surgical Trainees: the Italian and Swedish experience</li> <li>• Medical Student and Foundation Doctors Parallel Session</li> </ul> |
|---|

President. A memorable evening concluded with a live DJ and dancing into the early hours.

On Sunday morning the Medical Student and Foundation Doctor parallel session continued to draw a crowd of keen junior attendees. This year's talks covered preparing for a career in surgery, how to write an abstract, and a new surgical careers fair where delegates were able to informally chat with Registrars from all the main surgical specialities who could answer their questions directly.

In the main hall Ms Carol Makin, Past-President of the Royal Society of Medicine Section of Coloproctology gave an insightful talk on serendipity in surgery. Other talks addressed the business of healthcare and the science of surgical training, with the ASGBI ASiT Short Paper Session and the SARS ASiT Academic and Research Surgery session seeing the remaining highest-scoring abstract authors present their work.

**Table 5**  
ASiT Swann–Morton Silver Scalpel Award nominees.

|  |
|--|
| <b>Mr Andrew Guy</b>   |
| Consultant Vascular and General Surgeon<br>Leighton Hospital, Crewe      |
| <b>Mr Alan Horgan</b>  |
| Consultant Laproscopic Surgeon<br>Freeman Hospital, Newcastle            |
| <b>Mr Bernard Lee</b>  |
| Consultant Vascular Surgeon<br>Belfast City Hospital                     |
| <b>Mr Sunil Ohri</b>   |
| Consultant Adult Cardiac Surgeon<br>Southampton General Hospital         |
| <b>Mr Paul Renwick</b>   |
| Consultant Vascular Surgeon<br>Hull Royal Infirmary                      |
| <b>Mr Humphrey Scott (2012 winner)</b>                                   |
| Colorectal Surgeon<br>Ashford and Peter's NHS Foundation Trust, Chertsey |

**Table 6**  
ASiT Corporate Sponsors and Conference Exhibitors.

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**Platinum Corporate Sponsor**

- Ethicon

**Gold Corporate Sponsors**

- Covidien
- Medical Protection Society
- Ansell Healthcare Europe

**Silver Corporate Sponsors**

- Royal College of Surgeons of England
- Wesleyan Medical Sickness

**Other Exhibitors and Conference Sponsors**

- Africa Health Placements
- AOUK
- Army Medical Services
- BJS Society
- BMJ OnExamination
- Cochrane Collaboration
- Doctors Support Network
- Elsevier Publishing
- Hodder/Examdoctor
- LaproSurge
- Laprotrain
- Operation Hernia
- PasTest
- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
- Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
- Royal Medical Benevolent Fund
- Royal Society of Medicine
- RRSSC Microsurgery
- Swann-Morton
- Wesleyan
- Wetlab

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**Table 7**  
ASiT Conference feedback from delegates.

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**Written Feedback**

“The pre course conferences were excellent and are a key integral reason that I attend. Keep up the good work!”

“Overall I think the conference was good and well organised”

“I attended the critical skills appraisal course which was excellent. I think the whole conference was run extremely well and will want to attend again”

“Very Good. Great for trainees”

Laparoscopic skills course: “Great teaching in lectures and good input and feedback during the practicals”

“Brilliant course. Interactive. Practical Sessions. Very pleased to have done it.”

Foundation Skills in Surgery Course: “I registered for the conference primarily for this course. My goodness it was worth every penny. All the tutors were really helpful, friendly, enthusiastic and objective towards all types of ‘silly’ questions I asked. Thank you so much”

**Feedback Survey Data**

**Would you recommend an ASiT Conference to a colleague?**  
Yes = 92.7%

**Would you attend an ASiT Conference in the future?**  
Yes = 88.8%

**Do you think the ASiT Conference offered good value for money?**  
Yes = 82.8%

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This year’s ASiT Lecture was delivered by Professor Dion Morton (School of Cancer Sciences, University of Birmingham) who discussed trainee-led surgical research collaboratives and the future of surgical research.

Afternoon sessions continued with an international trainee perspective from Italian surgical trainee association President Jessica Montori and Swedish trainee association President Ninos Oussis. This was followed by UK-specific talks addressing the role of the Joint Committee for Surgical Training (JCST) and the application process for surgical training, with detailed statistics provided by Dr Alison Carr (Senior Clinical Advisor to the Medical Education and Training Programme of the Department of Health).

The day concluded with the Elsevier Medical Student Prize oral presentations session, and the announcement of the award winners from the conference weekend.

As ever, the Association is indebted to our corporate partners who recognise the importance of supporting the ASiT Conference and investing in a future generation of surgeons. This year saw a considerably larger exhibition with 27 organisations attending. From international charities to multinational companies, we were pleased to introduce them to our delegates and thank them for their continued support. The names of sponsors and exhibitors are provided in Table 6.

Feedback from delegates was strongly supportive, with further details and comments provided in Table 7. As a conference organised by trainee surgeons for trainee surgeons, understanding what our colleagues want and need from our conference is vital in meeting their educational needs.

Behind the scenes, 12-months of preparation and hard work go into ensuring the smooth running of such a major event. We are grateful for the administrative support provided by Ms Laura Andrews, and by Kristina Gloufchev and Harriet Innes over the conference weekend. We also thank the Council of the Association of Surgeons in Training, Cardiff University Medical School student helpers, and all our faculty and speakers for their time and assistance.

Plans are already well advanced for the next conference in April 2013, and we will be announcing details over the summer. Abstract submission and delegate registration will open in the autumn. To be kept up-to-date please subscribe to our email updates via our website [www.asit.org](http://www.asit.org), follow us on Twitter @ASiTofficial, and join us on Facebook.

**Funding**

The conference was supported through the assistance of our sponsors and exhibitors detailed in Table 7.

**Reference**

1. Fitzgerald JE, Giddings C. Association of surgeons in training conference–Sheffield 2011. *International Journal of Surgery* 2011;**9**(7):493–4.

G. Khera, ASiT President 2011–2012<sup>a</sup>, J.R.L. Wild, ASiT Honorary Secretary and Sponsorship Co-ordinator<sup>a</sup>, J.E.F. Fitzgerald, ASiT Past-President and 2012 Conference Organiser<sup>a\*</sup>  
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<sup>a</sup> On behalf of the Association of Surgeons in Training



# ASiT

Association of Surgeons in Training 2012  
Surgical Conference | Cardiff | 23-25 March



## Conference Registration Now Open!

**Come along, socialise, and get-ahead in your surgical training**

The ASiT 2012 Conference will be held in the historic Cardiff City Hall in Wales. This is your chance to socialise with over 500 fellow trainees from all nine surgical specialties, listen to the latest up-dates in clinical practice, training, and workforce issues, and hear what the future holds for us all. training. The weekend includes:

- **The only national surgical trainee conference for all surgical specialties**
- **Educational conference programme with expert guest speakers**
- **Trainee research and audit prize sessions with over £2,000 to be won!**

## Conference Courses and Highlights

- **Eight pre-conference training courses** offering great value on Friday 23 March Including Covidien Core Laparoscopic Skills, SARS/BSJ Research Skills, Anastomotic Stapling and Energised Dissection, ASiT/BOTA Foundation Skills in Surgery Course
- **Planning Your Career:** surgical trainees at war, and how to stay out of jail!
- **Clinical Updates:** specialty developments and the science of surgical training
- **Medical Student / Foundation Year Session:** Surgical Careers Fair and advice
- **Welcome Drinks Reception** in Cardiff City Hall on Friday 23 March
- **Charity Gala Dinner Party** at the new Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama



## Abstracts, Prizes and Publication

Abstracts of audit and research projects are invited from all nine surgical specialties and medical students. The highest ranking accepted abstracts are published in an indexed online supplement of Elsevier's *International Journal of Surgery*.

Abstracts will be peer reviewed and selected for oral or poster presentation. Over 16 research and audit prizes are available for oral and poster presentations. To find out more or to submit an abstract please visit the ASiT website: [www.asit.org](http://www.asit.org)

## Key Conference Information

- Registration costs have been reduced or kept the same for the 2012 Conference
- **Abstract submission opens online:** Saturday 1 October 2011
- **Conference registration opens online:** Tuesday 1 November 2011
- **Abstract submission deadline:** Midnight, Sunday 15 January 2012
- **Abstract selection announcement:** Mid-February 2012
- **Discount early-bird registration ends:** Friday 17 February 2012



Keep up-to-date, join the ASiT mailing list, and register on the ASiT website: [www.asit.org](http://www.asit.org)

Tel: 0207 973 0302 | Fax: 0207 430 9235 | E-mail: [info@asit.org](mailto:info@asit.org)

Fig. 8. The promotional poster for the 2012 ASiT Conference in Cardiff.