

Victoria has a good and safe healthcare system



About VASM

VASM was established in 2007 and is funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services' Safer Care Victoria branch.

VASM independently reviews all surgically-related deaths in Victoria and identifies areas for improvement in care delivered by Victorian surgeons and health services. VASM also investigates the deaths of patients who didn't have surgery but were admitted under the care of a surgeon.

Surgery is safe in Victoria

The number of surgical deaths with identified preventable issues is continuing to drop - the rate of annual surgical deaths has almost halved since 2007.

Most 'surgical deaths' do not occur on the operating table. Such deaths are very rare events.

The majority of surgical deaths have happened in very elderly patients, often with underlying health problems who are admitted as emergency patients with life-threatening conditions. The actual cause of death was due to their pre-existing health issues, rather than the surgery itself.

Any surgery has its own level of risk

As a patient, you are entitled to be aware of the risks involved with your care. The operation should be clearly explained by your surgeon. If you do not understand the risks, it is important that you ask questions. The decision to proceed with surgery is up to you or your power of attorney.

Victorian surgical statistics from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019

Victorian population:	6.7 million	Male : Female (%)	57.8 : 42.2
Surgical procedures:	709,906	Median age:	78
Mortality rate:	0.2%	Emergency surgeries:	83.4%

Most common co-morbid factors leading to surgical complications



Cardiovascular
 (heart problems, high blood pressure)



Advanced age
 (frailty delaying recovery)



Respiratory
 (asthma, pulmonary disease)

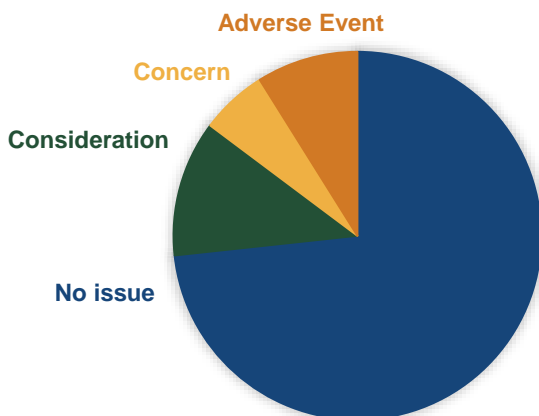


Renal
 (diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease)



Malignancy
 (presence of a malignant tumour, cancer)

Peer-review outcomes on clinical management issues



The 0.2% mortality rate in Victoria was made up of 1,767 mortalities reported to the VASM from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, with 926 of these completing the whole audit process at the time of publishing. These findings indicated:

- **73.3%** of cases had **safe and appropriate** surgical care provided.
- **11.9%** of cases where alternative treatment **could** have been an option.
- **5.9%** of cases where improvements **should** have possibly been made.
- **8.9%** of cases where improvements were **required**.

