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## **New pilot set to reduce health costs**

**10 May 2018**

As the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) and the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) concurrently host their annual scientific gatherings in Sydney, the two Colleges have taken the opportunity to promote an exciting new bi-national pilot study.

The pilot will work by collecting data from participating hospitals on emergency abdominal surgeries (laparotomies) performed within their hospital.

This data will then be used to provide real-time feedback to each participating site, allowing them to assess their performance against evidence-based indicators of care and to drive quality improvement processes across the hospital.

Mr James Aitken, a Western Australian colorectal surgeon, has been heavily involved in the establishment of the pilot. He said that it presented an opportunity for the Colleges to eventually replicate the results of a similar program in the UK, which has resulted in significant savings for the health system.

“Emergency laparotomies are surgical procedures that carry high 30-day mortality rates, which place significant demands on resources with variable outcomes and standards of care.

“Such variation not only suggests that clinical care and outcomes could be improved but that quality improvement would likely lead to significant cost savings.

“We have seen in England and Wales since the National Emergency Laparotomy Audit (NELA) was established, there have already been noticeable gains.

“For example, the NELA costs the equivalent of about AUD\$400 000 per year. After only three years, the evidence shows that the reduction in average length of stay led to an estimated cost saving of AUD\$54 million per annum in bed days.

“While there are clear lessons that can be learnt locally from the NELA, the Australian and New Zealand contexts are different, and it would be unwise to extrapolate from overseas results without quality local data as well.

“The pilot will allow us to generate this local data, which will then be used to support a funding application for a more detailed, multi-year bi-national quality improvement study.

“We strongly believe that this will lead to the same sorts of savings and quality improvements in Australia and New Zealand that have been witnessed overseas.”

**Media inquiries: Mark Morgan, Policy and Communications Officer  
(08) 8219 0922 or 0488 218 009**

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# MEDIA RELEASE

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President of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists, Professor David A Scott, said the pilot study project was an important step in improving patient care.

“ANZCA and RACS are joint partners in the project because both specialties need to work together to deliver the expertise and teamwork required for improving outcomes from these high-risk operations,” Professor Scott said.

“We hope this study will lead to fewer complications for patients with the goal of saving lives and reducing health costs.”

Mr Aitken will be making a presentation on Thursday 10 May at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons’ 87th Annual Scientific Congress which is being held in Sydney between 7-11 May. The congress brings together some of the top surgical and medical minds from across New Zealand, Australia, and the rest of the world.

For more information about the RACS Annual Scientific Congress please visit:

<https://asc.surgeons.org/>

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#### **About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)**

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

[www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)

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