



Dear Trainees / Kia ora koutou,

I hope this final newsletter of the year finds you well, and looking forward to a holiday period with at least some time away from the hospital to spend with family and friends.

As 2023 draws to a close, I'd like to congratulate those of you who have successfully completed examinations, particularly the monumental fellowship examination. Many of you will have gained valuable skills and completed other training requirements, along the pathway to fellowship. I hope these serve you well in a rewarding surgical career.

I'd like to thank all of you who reached out to RACSTA this year. I hope we were able to help. For those who took the time to complete the Australian Medical Training Survey or the Aotearoa RACSTA Survey, I extend my gratitude. The results of these surveys will be reviewed at RACS' Committee of Surgical Education & Training (CSET) and at RACS Council in early 2024. These surveys are vitally important, as the feedback we receive is a useful barometer for the prevailing attitudes of surgical trainees. I assure you, the issues raised are seriously considered by RACSTA and The College.

I'm sure it is fair to say that 2023 has been a challenging year at RACS. The College's financial Recovery Committee has made great strides in securing the future of The College. You will, by now, be aware that this comes with a significant financial impact to trainees (and fellows), in the form of fee increases. I thank all of you who got in touch with RACSTA to discuss the impact of potential fee increases, and those of you who engaged with the webinars earlier in the year. While we all would prefer that fees did not increase, I'm confident that the pressure RACSTA has applied throughout the college has limited the delta of these increases. We have continually asked for further detail as to the expenditure of subscription monies throughout various college activities, and I understand that significant progress has been made to provide this to trainees. If you have further questions about the fee increases, I would encourage you to attend an upcoming webinar to be held on 7th December 2023. We will include a registration link in this Newsletter.

This year, The RACSTA Committee undertook a large piece of work to provide a comprehensive report on training to the Australian Medical Council (AMC). This will serve to inform the AMC's and The Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ)'s re-accreditation of RACS as the provider of advanced surgical education throughout Australia and Aotearoa. The re-accreditation process is a significant undertaking, and by providing direct trainee feedback, we are able to set the tone for how surgical training will continue to evolve. I do hope that the constructive feedback provided RACSTA's report will serve to guide ongoing improvement to the delivery of surgical training.

My time as Chair of RACSTA (and as a trainee) is reaching its conclusion. I'm proud of the impact that RACSTA has had both within, and also outside The College. Highlights of RACSTA's advocacy in 2023 include the de-coupling of the fellowship exam written and viva, ongoing expansion of flexible training, improvements in the hospital accreditation process, progress relating to leave portability and relocation expenses, and engagement with external organisations such as AMC, the AMA Council of Doctors in Training, and various government health departments. I'm so grateful for my Deputy Chair, Dr Sui Hui Ong, who is also taking over as Chair of RACSTA in 2024 – she is an astute and pragmatic leader, and along with the incoming 2024 executive, I know the RACSTA Committee is in good hands. To my fantastic executive, and all the RACSTA Committee members, thank you all so much for your work this year.

As we move into the holiday period, I know most of us will have to work. Where possible, I encourage you to take time for your family and loved ones. Surgical training has largely been rewarding for me, but at the same time, through speaking to many of you, and my own experience, I know of the great personal, physical, and emotional cost it can entail. Please be kind to one another; keep an eye out for your junior colleagues; thank your mentors; and be mindful of your own wellbeing. RACSTA is here to support you if needed – just reach out.

Kind Regards / Ngā Manaakitanga,

Justin Parr
RACSTA Chair
December 2024

