



Dear Trainees / Kia ora koutou,

I hope you've had a good start to the 2024 training year wherever you are in Australia/Aotearoa New Zealand. Some of you (like myself) will be in throes of study mode with the Fellowship Exam coming up; best of luck with the preparation and don't forget to look after yourself as best you can in all facets during the stressful time.

RACSTA has had an interesting few months. Our advocacy this year has started with the recent Australian Medical Council (AMC)/ The Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) accreditation review of RACS, which The RACSTA Committee provided feedback for last year as a key stakeholder. Due to concerns regarding governance and structural issues to training, this has resulted in RACS being given only a six-month accreditation extension in order to address these concerns. There was no question regarding the quality of the training that RACS provides, but the system in which it is delivered and overseen required clarification. From what I gather, this has been an ongoing issue for a number of years, and as Trainees across all the surgical specialties will recognise, how we receive the training within each surgical specialty is not uniform. The AMC/MCNZ have an educational lens, and if through this accreditation review basic things we expect as Trainees can be standardised across all specialties with the aim of improving Training, this can only be a good thing. What it means in practical terms is less clear, and no doubt we will hear in the next few months about this process. RACSTA will continue to provide a Trainee perspective on changes to be made and will continue to build on feedback provided to AMC/MCNZ last year as to how training can be improved.

At the February Council meetings, RACSTA has continued advocating for leave portability across states, and relocation expenses. Change for this to happen for those training in Australia will need to be at the government level, and we have made it clear that this is an important issue to continue to be pursued. Alongside relocation costs at changeover, and with the increased RACS component of our Training fee having taken effect, this has no doubt been felt. RACSTA has been very clear with our position on any further fee increases and this is not something we expect on the horizon for 2024.

This year, RACSTA is keen to work on how Trainees can be better supported through the Fellowship Examination. With a 'high stakes' exit examination, it is important that if it takes more than one attempt to pass this hurdle, that as Trainees we are supported through this. I understand this is a difficult topic to talk about, and if you have experience you would be willing to share, I would greatly appreciate your time and thoughts on the process. Just reach out to me via the RACSTA email.

In November last year, we held a successful RACSTA Induction Conference, with excellent speakers and 117 attendees. This was a purely virtual conference, and will be in this format going forward to allow maximum attendance as well as to allow for minimal to no fee for attendance.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to RACSTA – we are your Trainees Association, and will continue to advocate on any and all issues that can improve our experience while managing all the challenges that come with being Surgical Trainees.

Kind regards/ Ngā manaakitanga,

Sue Hui Ong
RACSTA Chair
March 2024

