



Post-operative NZ mortality data a driver for surgical safety

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The collection of data regarding deaths during and after surgery can be used to influence surgical safety, delegates to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' 84th Annual Scientific Conference have been told.

Dr Catherine Ferguson, a Wellington otolaryngologist and deputy chair of the New Zealand Perioperative Mortality review Committee, today presented her paper on post-operative mortality rates as an indicator for surgical safety.

According to Dr Ferguson, post-operative mortality data could be used to improve outcomes in the riskiest surgical procedures.

"There is always a risk with any surgical procedure," Dr Ferguson said.

"Unfortunately this means that in some cases, depending on the procedure and the circumstances of the individual, post-operative deaths do occur.

"Due to New Zealand's relatively small population, it is well positioned to collect data at a national level," Dr Ferguson said.

"The WHO recommended data collection has focused on the mortality rates of the 10 most common surgical procedures. Generally speaking, in New Zealand those procedures have very low mortality rates so such data has very little ability to drive safety improvements.

"However, by analysing data on procedures with higher mortality rates, it will be possible to identify common risk factors within these surgeries and then implement strategies to reduce the likelihood of death occurring. In this way, mortality data has the potential to make quite an impact on patient safety."

The World Health Organisation includes the collection of post-operative mortality data as one of its global reference list core health indicators, a list designed to improve the quality of global health reporting.

Dr Ferguson presented her paper at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' Annual Scientific Conference which is being held this week in Perth. The conference brings together the top surgical and medical minds from across New Zealand, Australia and the rest of the world.

The 2015 conference also pays tribute to the centenary of Gallipoli by analysing ethics and developments in surgery over the past 100 years, in war and peace time, as well as exploring what the future may hold in surgical progress.

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.

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