

RCoA Research, Education & Travel Grants 2017

Award: Sargant Fund & Belfast Fund

Applicant: Dr Catrin Williams

Project Title: *The perioperative surgical journey: Improving the primary-secondary care interface in Wales*

Project Description:

Recently, emphasis on improvements in provisions of secondary care services such as expansion of preoperative assessment, objective exercise testing, multidisciplinary team working and critical care services have facilitated enhanced clinical decision-making for individual patients in secondary care. GPs are often expected to assist in optimising patients before surgery. Anecdotal feedback from primary and secondary care indicate that communication difficulties hamper this process.

Improving the quality of care at the primary-secondary care interface is both a national and wider concern. Effective communications and functional relationships across the interface are vital for the delivery of optimal patient care particularly during the perioperative period. This has been identified as one of the top ten research priorities by the Anaesthesia and Perioperative Care Priority Setting Partnership. Sharing knowledge and education between primary and secondary care staff represents a way to improve communication. A good starting point would be providing GPs and allied healthcare professionals with enhanced knowledge of the adverse perioperative impact of unhealthy behaviours and poorly recognised co-morbidities.

Prehabilitation such as structured exercise, smoking, alcohol and nutritional advice, works on the principal that enhancing functional capacity before scheduled surgery improves ability to tolerate physiological surgical stress. Setting up new prehabilitation services is costly and involves significant time and investment. Alternatively, GPs already have access to nutritional, smoking and alcohol counselling for patients and can prescribe exercise so it represents an appealing and beneficial possibility to use services that already exist. The likely clinical benefits to patients and financial benefits to the NHS means this is an important area to consider.

The project would consist of two phases. Starting in January 2018, anaesthetists within Wales involved in preoperative assessment will be asked their views on the primary-secondary care interface, challenges and areas that function well. GP practices in Wales would be surveyed to establish knowledge of the impact of risk factors on perioperative outcome and explore attitudes to screening and managing modifiable risk factors preoperatively. The second phase of the project would involve setting up a free CPD website for GPs in Wales with the aim to share the knowledge and educate on the perioperative impact of unhealthy behaviours and poorly recognised or

managed co-morbidities. The website would be launched within 12 months and be fully functional within 24 months.

Educational material for the website (in the form of tutorials, videos and interactive questions) would be provided by anaesthetic trainees undertaking advanced modules or fellowships in perioperative medicine, working alongside Welsh GP academic trainees.

The project costs are the postal survey and creating the website which would be free at the point of use. The costs cover an initial 36-month period enabling the project to be established and assess its impact on the primary-secondary care interface.

I am confident that this will be a highly rewarding project that I will have as much to gain from as to contribute to as will all other trainees involved. The ultimate reward will be the knowledge that patient care through the perioperative period will be further enhanced.