

# Investigating barriers to surgical careers and addressing the growing need for diverse role models in surgery through a mentoring event

Sabba A Hussain<sup>1,2</sup>, Mona Jaffar-Karballai<sup>1</sup>, Rebecca Beni<sup>1</sup>, Anna Bridgens<sup>2</sup>, and Yael Gelfer<sup>1,2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup> St George's University of London, London, UK. <sup>2</sup> St George's University NHS Trust, London, UK.

## INTRODUCTION

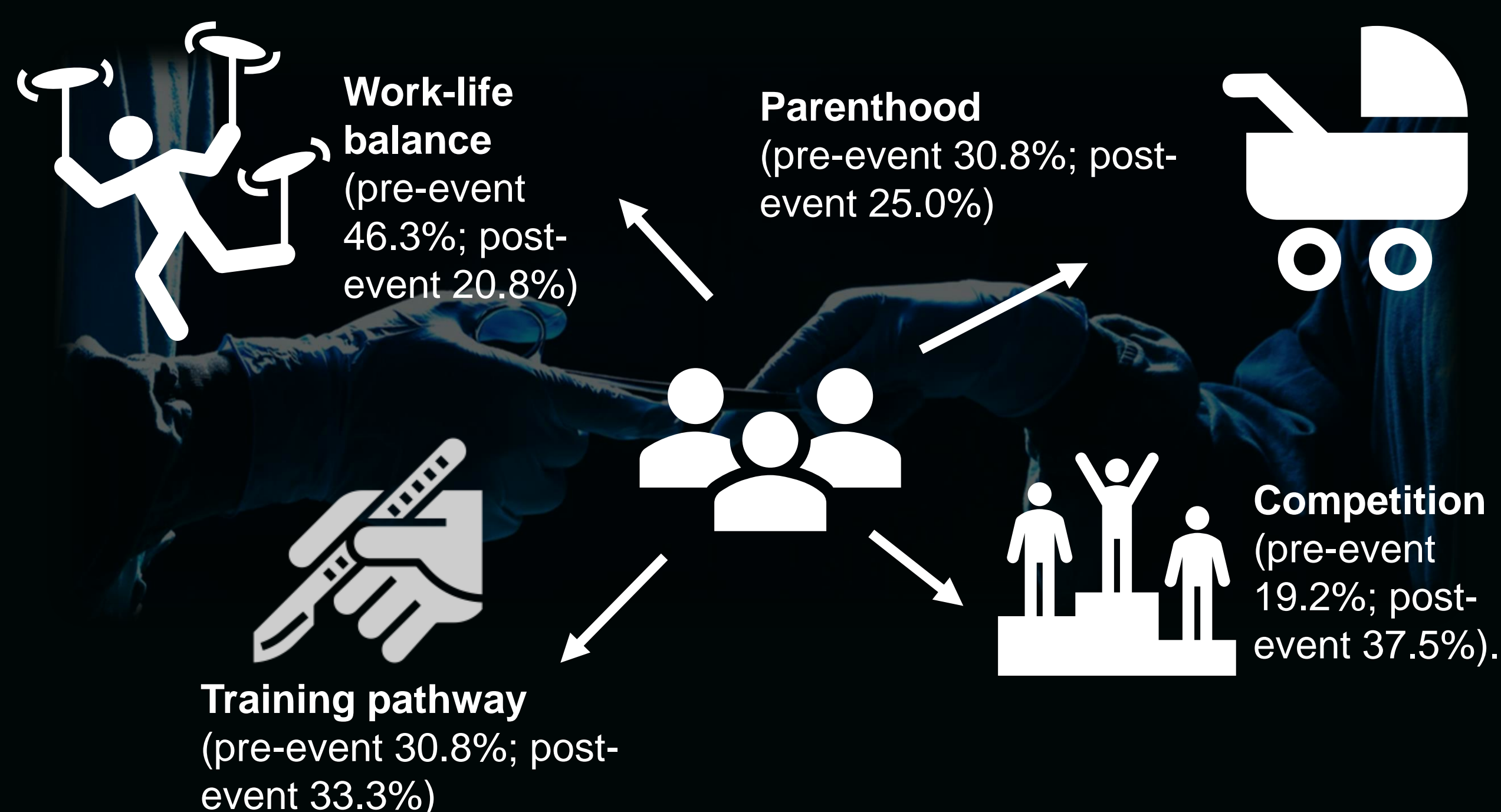
- **Attrition** of females across **all stages** of surgical training remains a significant problem<sup>1</sup>
- **Only 14.7%** become consultant surgeons<sup>2</sup>
- Literature strongly support utility of **mentorship**<sup>3,4</sup>.
- The **aim** of this project was to **assess local barriers** to surgical careers and **provide diverse role models** to support and encourage uptake.

## METHODS

- The project was **prospectively** registered (AUDI003483).
- A **mentoring event** was held, **the first of its kind** locally, composed of consultant and trainee surgeons from diverse backgrounds.
- Following topics were discussed: **career journeys, work-life balance, parenthood and less-than-full-time training.**
- **Surveys** to medical students were disseminated prospectively 1 month before and immediately after the event to assess efficacy.
- Surveys involved **open-ended and Likert-scale** questions ('10=very-much'; '0=not at all') across a series of statements assessing opinion and openness to surgical careers.
- **Thematic qualitative analysis** was undertaken.

## RESULTS

- Students identifying as **female** across **all year-groups** from **London and Surrey** completed **pre-event (n=26)** and **post-event surveys (n=24)**.
- **69.2%** scored **≥7/10** reporting they were considering a surgical career pre-event, and **91.7% post-event.**
- The **most common** uncertainties and reservations were found to reduce following the event: **work-life balance (pre-event 46.3%; post-event 20.8%);** and **parenthood (30.8%; 25.0%).**
- Remaining concerns included the **training pathway (30.8%; 33.3%)** and **competitiveness (19.2%; 37.5%).**
- **83.3%** scored **≥8/10** stating the event **strengthened their decision** to become a surgeon.
- The event met **all student expectations**, exceeding in 25%.
- The format was **well received** (58.3% scoring 10/10), and **66.7% signed for additional mentoring** to support career progression.



## CONCLUSIONS

The **value of mentoring** and **early support** in decision making is **vital and beneficial** to the career progression of future aspiring surgeons. Future support is required in the form of **long-term mentoring.**

**References:** (1.) Hampton T, Greenhalgh R, Ryan D, et al. Female surgical trainee attrition. *The Bulletin of the Royal College of Surgeons of England* 2016;98(3):134-37. doi: 10.1308/rcsbull.2016.134 (2) RCS. *Statistics - Women in Surgery Royal College of Surgeons (England)2023* [Available from: <https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/careers-in-surgery/women-in-surgery/statistics/> accessed 27 May 2023. (3) Winfrey SR, Parameswaran P, Gerull KM, et al. *Effective Mentorship of Women and Underrepresented Minorities in Orthopaedic Surgery: A Mixed-Methods Investigation.* *JB JS Open Access* 2022;7(4) doi: 10.2106/JBJS.OA.22.00053 [published Online First: 20221123] (4) Stephens EH, Heisler CA, Temkin SM, et al. *The Current Status of Women in Surgery: How to Affect the Future.* *JAMA Surg* 2020;155(9):876-85. doi: 10.1001/jamasurg.2020.0312