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

Sabba A Hussain¹,², Mona Jaffar-Karballai³, Rebecca Beni¹, Anna Bridgens², and Yael Gelfer¹,²
¹ St George’s University of London, London, UK; ² St George’s University NHS Trust, London, UK.

INTRODUCTION
• Attrition of females across all stages of surgical training remains a significant problem¹.
• Only 14.7% become consultant surgeons².
• Literature strongly support utility of mentorship³,⁴.
• The aim of this project was to assess local barriers to surgical careers and provide diverse role models to support and encourage uptake.

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.

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.

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.