



Surgical titles in the NHS Position statement

The Royal College of Surgeons of England was established in 1800, with the remit of 'promoting the art and science of surgery'. Core to this, for the benefit of patient safety and quality of care, is the tenet that in order for someone to be a surgeon they must as a minimum qualify as a medical doctor and undertake post-graduate surgical training. There are various categories of surgeons including consultant surgeons, specialty doctors and surgeons in training. Consultant surgeons must achieve Specialist Registration with the General Medical Council and be appointed to a recognised consultant post.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England believes that:-

1. variable use of the term 'consultant surgeon' within the health service is misleading to patients. The title 'consultant surgeon' (including any prefix, insert or suffix) must be restricted to medically qualified practitioners in a surgical specialty on the Specialist Register of the General Medical Council, who have been appointed by a statutory Advisory Appointment Committee process. Furthermore, the title 'consultant dental surgeon' (including any prefix, insert or suffix) must be restricted to dentally qualified practitioners in a dental or surgical specialty who have undertaken approved postgraduate training and are on the Specialist Register of the General Dental Council, who have been appointed competitively by a statutory Advisory Appointment Committee process.
2. any healthcare practitioners undertaking invasive surgical procedures should only do so if:-
 - a. they have recognised training and qualifications appropriate for the condition being treated;
 - b. they work in an appropriate medical environment, registered by the Care Quality Commission;
 - c. they are working within an appropriate Clinical Governance framework under any professional supervision required and subject to annual appraisal and review.
3. to ensure clarity for patients the 1983 Medical Act (with its various amendments) must be further amended to provide protection of the title consultant surgeon.
4. the public must be fully informed about the background and meaning of the various job titles currently in use within the surgical healthcare setting, in order to allow them to make genuinely informed choices regarding the clinician by whom they wish to be treated.

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