

# Royal College of Surgeons

Briefing for Queen's Speech debates



## The Queen's Speech & cosmetic surgery

### **We welcome support for seven-day care**

The Government's support for the NHS' Five Year Forward View, outlined in the Queen's Speech, is welcome. We are also pleased an early commitment has been made to providing seven-day care. Mortality is higher for patients admitted to hospital at the weekend, so seven-day care could improve outcomes for patients requiring hospital treatment. Seven-day hospital care must be consultant-led to ensure timely intervention and better outcomes for acutely unwell patients. We must also ensure there is seven day access to key services and facilities in hospitals like pharmacy, radiology, and physiotherapy, as well as in the community for a patient's next steps in treatment.

### **Cosmetic surgery and professional regulation**

We were disappointed that the Government chose not to introduce legislation to reform the regulation of health professionals.

The RCS had called for the General Medical Council (GMC) to be given a new power to tell the public and employers which surgeons are qualified to undertake cosmetic surgery. At present, the law allows any doctor (including non-surgeons) to perform cosmetic surgery without undertaking additional training or qualifications.

Following the PIP breast implant scandal and Professor Sir Bruce Keogh's review of cosmetic surgery, the Royal College of Surgeons is drafting new standards of training and practice to correct this. The College will introduce a new system of

certification to identify those surgeons that have the appropriate skills and experience to provide cosmetic surgery.

However, enforcing the requirements will be difficult unless the GMC is given a new power to formally recognise these qualifications on the medical register. Without this change in the law, patients and employers will not always be able to tell a proficient cosmetic surgeon from a professional who has limited recognised experience in the specific procedure.

At the Department of Health's request, the UK Law Commissions drafted legislation to update professional regulation, including for cosmetic surgery. This was published in 2014 and widely supported, but the coalition Government chose to delay enacting legislation. We were disappointed that legislation was again not included this year.

### **Protection of surgical and dental titles**

In addition, the Law Commissions' proposals would protect professional titles, specifically that of 'surgeon' and some dental titles. 92% of the public<sup>1</sup> believe the job title 'surgeon' should be restricted by law. However, existing provisions in the Medical Act 1983 have proved difficult to exercise and the law needs updating. We urge the Government to introduce legislation as soon as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> ICM poll of 2034 adults, 22-24 June 2012.