

Increasing Women's Motivation to Embark on and Succeed in a Surgical Career

Dr Kim Peters and Prof Michelle Ryan, psychologists from the University of Exeter, are running a project (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council) in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons, Scalpel (the UK's largest undergraduate surgical society), and the Medical Women's Federation. The project aims to translate research conducted by Peters and Ryan into knowledge-exchange interventions designed to boost the number of female surgeons in the UK.

The project is developing a range of initiatives designed to increase (a) the motivation of female medical students to embark on a surgical career, (b) the motivation of female surgical trainees to succeed in training, and consequently, (c) the number of women in surgery. These initiatives will be based on Peters' and Ryan's research which demonstrates that contextual factors related to identity fit can reduce women's motivation to pursue masculine occupations, such as surgery. Thus, initiatives will aim to directly bolster female medical students' and surgical trainees' perceptions of fit between their gender identity and the surgical identity by increasing the visibility of female surgical role models, and by providing both male and female role models who challenge perceptions that surgeons *are*, or *need to be*, a particular kind of person.

This project has the potential to contribute to society in at least three ways: (a) by increasing the representation of women in surgery and thus supporting gender equality in the medical profession, (b) by boosting the number of women who successfully complete their surgical training, thus facilitating cost efficiencies in the NHS training budget, and (c) by increasing the attractiveness of the surgical career to female students, thus helping to address current and future shortages in the number of UK surgeons, so ensuring that the well-being of the UK public is not compromised by these shortages.

A key initiative will be to create a multimedia resource, a *Women in Surgery Video Podcast (or vodcast)*. The Vodcast will provide a range of accessible and inspirational role models, both male and female, in part through hospital footage and short interviews with surgeons. The vodcast will be advertised and distributed to members of medical student and surgical trainee networks, it will be hosted on the RCS, Scalpel, and MWF websites, and will be embedded into a Women in Surgery Seminar Series Website.

The podcast will be launched at the Royal College of Surgeons (London) on International Women's Day, Friday the 8th of March.