



Gynaecological Surgical Training – The Irish Trainee’s Perspective & Potential Solutions

Karen Mulligan¹, Aisling Redmond¹, Suzanne O’Sullivan², Katie Field³, Claire Thompson¹

1. Dept of Gynaecological Oncology, UCD School of Medicine, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Dublin, Ireland

2. Dept of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Cork University Maternity Hospital, Cork, Ireland

3. Dept of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University Hospital Limerick Group, Limerick, Ireland



Objective

The RCOG Gynaecological Surgery Recovery Plan highlighted the devastating impact COVID 19 has added to the existing challenges to surgical training in O&G and the urgent need to address this.

This survey was the first part of a regional improvement project for Gynaecological surgical training in Ireland. The initial step was to ascertain the current opinions and confidence levels of trainees in gynaecological surgery and to develop an understanding of their career goals.

Design

Many surveys have been conducted on training within Obstetrics & Gynaecology. However, a new vigour has emerged to assess this area, enhanced with the urgency to recover post pandemic. Ireland equally has felt the impact to surgical training and our project design hopes to start to address this. This survey was designed with specific focus on gynaecological surgical training and to identify the key areas to focus the recovery process on. Designed using the SurveyMonkey® platform and distributed.

Methods

The survey was circulated to all O&G trainees in Ireland (110). The 34 questions focused on the number of procedures performed over last 12 months and confidence levels on performing these procedures. Identification and management of complications was assessed, alongside future career aspirations. The returned results were anonymised and analysis performed using a password protected Excel® database.

Results

We received 76 respondents, with 46% (n=35) having worked in O&G for more than 5 years. The main findings included:

51% said they had thought of leaving O&G in the last 12 months

79% had NO access to a laparoscopic trainer in their hospital (only 38% who did had dedicated teaching on the trainers)

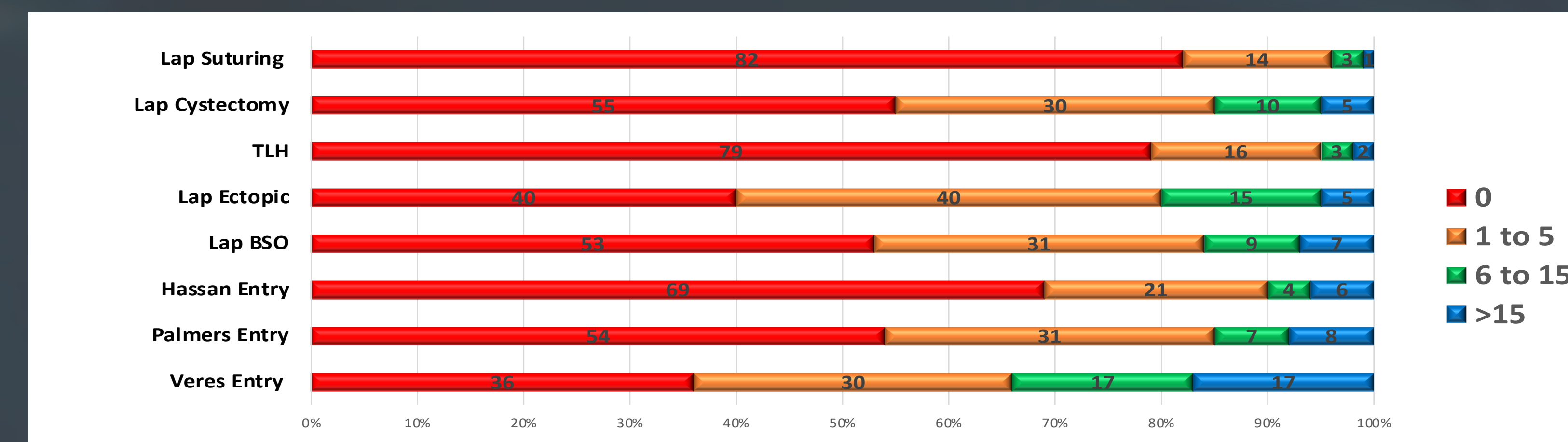
53% felt the specialty should be spilt into Obstetrics or Gynaecology (42% felt after SpR3/ST6)

63% felt they would choose addition Gynaecology training

98% wished to undertake a Fellowship after training

95% felt a mentor in Gynaecology would be extremely beneficial

Figure 1. How many of the following procedures (partial or complete) have you performed over the past 12 months (supervised or unsupervised)



- Forty trainees had not completed a laparoscopic salpingectomy in the past year (fig 1). Only laparoscopic procedure in which >50% of trainees felt comfortable performing was Veres entry at laparoscopy (fig 2).
- Two thirds of respondents (n=51) believed that the lack of gynae-surgery training has impacted decisions on future career choices.
- 42% of trainees did not feel confident in identifying uretric injury intraoperatively (fig 3).
- 43% of specialist registrar trainees (ST3-6) experienced difficulty in annual training progression due to a lack of surgical case numbers.

Figure 2. How confident do you feel about performing the following?

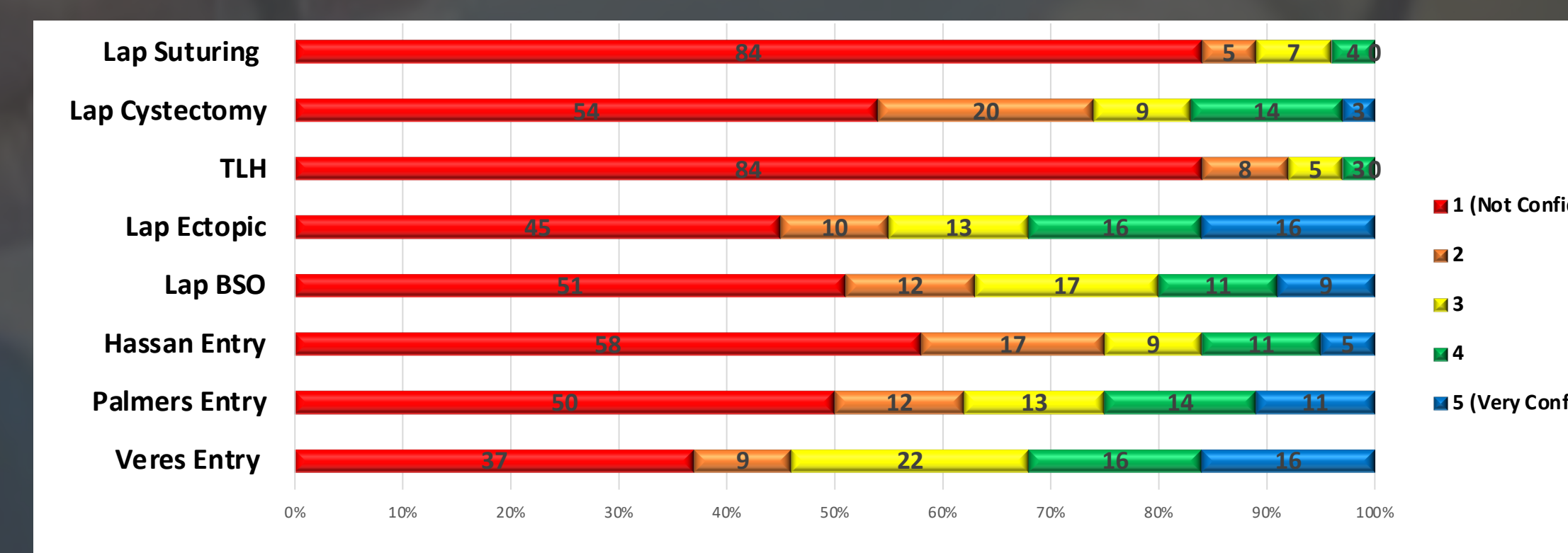
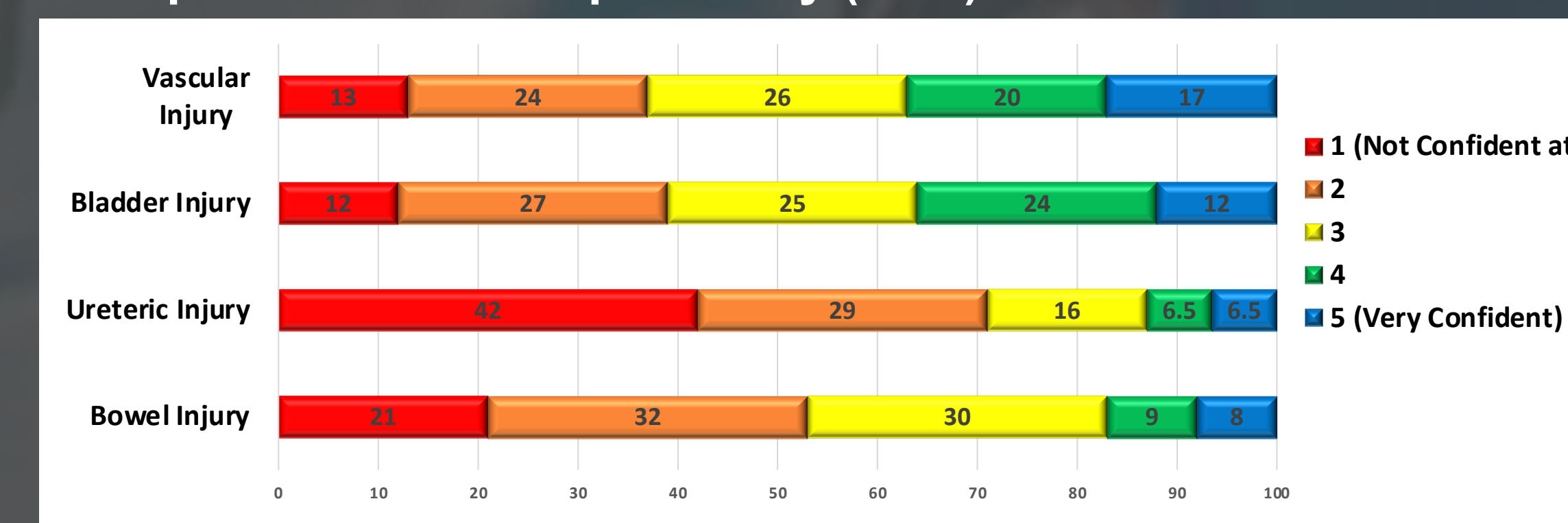


Figure 3. Confidence Levels for Identification of the following Complications Intra-Operatively (in %)



Conclusions

Trainees are significantly impacted by a lack of surgical exposure and training. This has understandably affected their confidence but also career planning, which may in turn affect national workforce structure and patient care.

Our project design has moved forward using this survey information to develop a regional laparoscopic simulation hub in Dublin following the awarding of funding from the Mater Hospital Foundation and SPARK initiative. A pilot programme for trainees will be offered from January 2022.