

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP,  
House of Commons,  
London,  
SW1A 0AA

30<sup>th</sup> March 2015

Dear Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP,

I write representing the Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT). ASiT is an educational charity run by qualified doctors who are surgeons in training, pursuing excellence in surgical training in the UK and in turn, the pursuit of excellence in surgical patient care.

On behalf of ASiT, I must make you aware of our anxieties regarding the proposed changes to medical training, as recommended by the Shape of Training Review, presided over by Professor Sir David Greenaway. An implementation group has already been formed and has reported to Health Ministers from the four UK nations. Few consultants-in-training had the opportunity to provide evidence, and numerous concerns were not addressed, both of which embarrass the consultation.

Training to be an NHS surgeon requires satisfactory completion of one of the most rigorous and high quality training systems in the world. However, there is continual erosion in this quality. European Working Time Regulations have reduced the number of hours that we work, with no significant improvement in the style of training. The proposed changes to reduce the length of our postgraduate training, including the potential migration of training in 'specialist' surgery into consultant practice, jeopardise the health of our nation. Our current high standards of surgical care are based upon delivery by consultants as they are currently trained. What the Shape of Training Review proposes is training a lower grade of doctor,

which will not deliver the standard of care the British people deserve. Patients deserve specialist surgeons, as specialisation has been shown to improve outcomes.

The fast-paced implementation of these reforms is dangerous and unforgiving. Surgery is beset with the challenges of political change, and consultants are only just emerging from the last major reorganisation of training, now commonly referred to as the 'MMC debacle'. The results of these changes have yet to be assessed, and yet another change is being rushed in. I urge you to call for a pause for transparent, wide consultation in this hasty implementation as an election policy for the Conservative Party, and to safeguard our patients against a poorly thought out plan to save money by decreasing the length, and hence quality of consultant training.

This organisation is far from alone in its concerns regarding these dangerous changes, a very broad range of medical specialties having expressed similar united anxieties in alliance with the medical profession's union, the British Medical Association. A majority of the 267,000 doctors registered in the United Kingdom is represented by these groups, and I am sure you are far better informed than me, regarding the high likelihood of such professionals exercising their right to vote in the forthcoming General Election.

The Association of Surgeons in Training seizes any opportunity to improve surgical training. However, with so many questions (as outlined in our attached response), I sincerely hope you appreciate that implementation of the recommendations in their present form poses significant and avoidable risk to patients, and we call for a pause for thought and proper consultation to halt the apparently runaway implementation of these radical reforms to surgical training.

Yours sincerely,



Miss Rhiannon Harries BMBS MRCS  
President, Association of Surgeons in Training