

# The use of the title 'Consultant Surgeon' by non medical practitioners

A position statement from



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## 1. Introduction

The medical act of 1983 part VI section 49 clearly states that:

“Any person who willfully and falsely pretends to be or takes or uses the name or title of ... surgeon ... or any name, title, addition or description implying that he is registered under any provision of this Act, or that he is recognised by law as a physician or surgeon ... shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine...”<sup>(1)</sup>

## Position Statement

For someone to be described as a surgeon in the United Kingdom we believe that they must be medically qualified and have completed post-graduate surgical training as recognised by one of the Royal Surgical Colleges. This is a highly competitive and lengthy process that takes a minimum of 10 years (after graduation from medical school) to complete.

During their decade of UK post-graduate training, trainees must complete the Foundation Programme, Core Surgical Training, sit and pass exacting examinations to obtain first Membership (MRCS) and then Fellowship (FRCS) of the Royal College of Surgeons alongside regular assessments and appraisals designed to assess their actual practical surgical training and assessment. Before they are issued with a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) a full review of all of this training is undertaken by the applicant’s Deanery and then forwarded to the JCST (Joint Committee on Surgical Training) for consideration of approval as long as specific competencies have been achieved. The CCT allows specialist registration with the General Medical Council and only

then are trainees eligible to be interviewed for a consultant post and, if successful, to use the title of Consultant Surgeon.

The Association of Surgeons in Training echoes the beliefs of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in their position statement of July 2010<sup>(2)</sup>, namely that:

1. Use of the term 'Consultant Surgeon' by non-medically qualified practitioners is misleading. The title 'Consultant Surgeon' (including any prefix, insert or suffix) must be applied only 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.
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. Patients must be made aware of the 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.

## References

1. Medical act; 1983. Available from: [http://www.gmc-uk.org/about/legislation/medical\\_act.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/about/legislation/medical_act.asp).
2. Royal College of Surgeons of England. Surgical titles in the NHS: Position statement. 2010, Jul.

## 1. Further Reading

1.1. ASiT has published a number of statements which are available at:

<http://www.asit.org/resources/articles>

1.2. These include our position statements:

- [Cost of surgical training \(April 2011\)](#)
- [Future of Surgical Training \(August 2010\)](#)
- [EWTD for Surgical Trainees \(August 2009\)](#)