



# STARSURG NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2023

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# CENTRAL STARSURG UPDATES

## APOLLO Study



In January 2023, in collaboration with EuroSurg, the APOLLO (Acute PresentatiOn of CoLorectal Cancer: an internatiOnal snapshot) study was launched. The first UK patient was recorded in Norwich, and we have been excited to see data collection progress.

APOLLO aims to characterise the variation in the management of acute presentations of colorectal cancer. So far, we have registered **98 centres across the UK and Republic of Ireland** with support from our network of 37 student regional leads. Globally, APOLLO is now registered at **318 hospitals** in over **50 countries**, and data has been entered for **over 500 patients**.

The study is ongoing and has a rolling start date until May 1st, 2023. Your site can register for a 6-week data collection period before this deadline. The last date a patient can be recruited is June 13th, 2023.

To collaborate with us in the UK & ROI, please contact your [STARSurg Regional Lead](#).

Project hub: <https://eurosurg.org/projects-hub/1092-2/>.

For any queries, please email: [apollo.eurosurg@gmail.com](mailto:apollo.eurosurg@gmail.com).

## Acute PresentatiOn of CoLorectal Cancer: an internatiOnal snapshot



Colorectal cancer (CRC) presents as an emergency in ~ 1/3 of patients. Emergency surgery for CRC is associated with significant mortality, morbidity, and poorer health related quality of life. Existing guidelines on the optimal management of such cases are based on low grade evidence.

**Primary aim:** Describe the variations in the management of acutely presenting colorectal cancer  
**Secondary aims:** Define 30- and 90-day mortality and ostomy rates and their risk factors



All hospitals across the world



Adults presenting with known OR new diagnosis of colorectal cancer



Patients for **operative and non-operative** management



6-wk data collection period(s)



Collaborative authorship model



Primary 90-day mortality rates

Secondary

Large bowel obstruction rates  
Mortality

Ostomy rates  
Operative complications

Stenting complications  
Readmissions

Scan to register

Apollo will help increase our understanding of the variability in global practice and associated outcomes in the management of emergency CRC, through an international, multi-centre collaborative study.

**Keen to take part?**

Collect data from 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023 – 13<sup>th</sup> Jun 2023 for any 6wk period



# CENTRAL STARSURG UPDATES

## Academic Surgery Evenings

The availability of opportunities and mentorship often heavily influences the surgical and clinical-academic career pathways of medical students and junior doctors [1,2]. As part of STARSurg's goal to support students and junior doctors interested in academic surgery, we launched Academic Surgery Evenings, regional events hosted by STARSurg leads, in 2020/21 and aim to:

1. Promote surgery and academic surgery as career paths to medical students and junior doctors on a national scale.
2. Facilitate networking and collaboration between those interested in surgery and academic surgery within each region.
3. Promote awareness and opportunities for engagement with regional and national groups within surgery and academic surgery.

In 2021, STARSurg regional leads delivered Academic Surgery Evenings across 31 regions with an estimated 850 attendees from the UK and Republic of Ireland. Respondents reported a significant increase in their knowledge and intention to pursue a surgical and/or academic career following these events [3].

This year, we are hosting **14 free, virtual Academic Surgery Evenings organised by each regional unit of the Specialised Foundation Programme**. These events will be run by teams of regional leads from across the UK and the Republic of Ireland and will take place over the next few months.

These events aim to highlight local opportunities for students and junior doctors. Each Academic Surgery Evening will feature discussions on academic surgery, the Specialised Foundation Programme, how to get engaged in academic surgery as a student, and a local specialist interest talk!

Find your local ASE here: [STARSurg Academic Surgery Evenings MedAll](#).



In March 2023, STARSurg Steering Committee members Michał, Daoud, Ieva and Shiraz presented our research outputs at the Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT), Surgical Research Society (SRS) and National Research Collaborative Meeting (NRCM) conferences. The presentations received positive feedback and we would like to thank all of our collaborators for their contributions.

## CASCADE (CARDiovaSCular outcomes after major abDominal surgEry)



### Presentation at NRCM

CASCADE included over 24,000 patients undergoing major abdominal surgery across Europe. We found that postoperative cardiac complications (PCCs) are common after major abdominal surgery (incidence = 2.4%) and happen early in the postoperative period.

CASCADE is the first study to estimate the causal relationship between PCCs and mortality and showed that up to one in five deaths were avoidable if PCCs could be prevented. CASCADE provides robust, up-to-date evidence for future clinical trials which aim to reduce the frequency of PCCs, and particularly myocardial events, in the postoperative period.

**We are currently in the process of submitting the first paper from the CASCADE dataset to a peer-reviewed journal, and hope to share some good news soon!**

## Systematic Review of Quality-of-Life Tools in Acute Pancreatitis

### Presentations at ASiT and SRS

Quality-of-life in acute pancreatitis is poorly characterised and there are no standardised tools for evaluating and developing new interventions. We conducted a systematic review which identified 43 quality-of-life tools from 131 studies of acute and chronic pancreatitis.

Using the COSMIN methodology for systematic reviews of patient-reported outcome measures, we found significant heterogeneity between quality-of-life tools and low levels of evidence for their methodological quality. We also noted a lack of patient and public involvement in the creation and validation of available instruments (n = 15/43, 34.8%).

Our systematic review, therefore, highlights a lack of high-quality tools for quality-of-life assessment in acute pancreatitis and suggests a methodological structure for the development and validation of new ones.

**We hope that this systematic review will inform future trials and cohort studies in acute pancreatitis to better capture the impact of the disease on patients through the use of validated tools and a better understanding of their limitations.**

## GRANULE (GeneRAtiNg StUdent Recruiters for Surgical Trials)

GRANULE is a STARSurg course developed in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, the University of Bristol's QuinteT team, the Bristol MRC ConDuCT-II Hub, and the Bowel Disease Research Foundation.

GRANULE is designed to equip medical students and junior doctors with the knowledge and practical skillset to recruit patients into clinical trials and aims to nurture the next generation of surgical researchers.

Since its inception in 2016, GRANULE has become a successful international course and has now been delivered across the United Kingdom and in Austria, Rwanda, Ghana, India, New Zealand, Australia, Lithuania, and France.

Most recently, STARSurg hosted GRANULE as a pre-conference course at the ASiT Annual Conference 2023 in Liverpool. 13 medical students and junior doctors participated in the course and overall shared highly positive feedback.

In addition to in-person courses, the [National Institute for Health and Care Research](#) (NIHR) currently hosts GRANULE as an e-learning module, which you can access if you are affiliated with the NIHR, the NHS, a UK university or another publicly funded organisation which conducts and supports clinical research.

Join our mailing list and follow us on social media to receive updates on future in-person GRANULE courses: [STARSurg UK – Student Audit and Research in Surgery](#).

For any queries regarding GRANULE, please email us at [starsurguk@gmail.com](mailto:starsurguk@gmail.com).



# INTERVIEW WITH MS. MARIA PICCIOCHI



By Moritz Steinruecke |  @medicmoritz

In this issue, we speak with Ms. Maria Picciochi, a general surgery trainee undertaking her PhD with Professor Dion Morton and Mr. Aneel Bhangu at the NIHR Global Health Research Unit on Global Surgery in Birmingham. Maria leads the HIPPO (Hernias, Pathway and Planetary Outcomes for Inguinal Hernia Surgery) study, which aims to describe global waiting times for inguinal hernia repair and will help characterise the backlog for elective surgery following the pandemic. You can find out more about the HIPPO study [here](#).

**Q: Can you tell us a bit about what made you choose a career in surgery?**

I like the pragmatic ways in which surgery approaches patients' problems. Each approach is individualised, but I like that you have treatment options which usually fix the main problem and enjoy the responsibility that success is, in part, dependent on your skills. I find this very stimulating and it pushes me to optimise my performance. I also really value the focused environment of the operating theatre, in which everyone works hard toward a positive outcome for the patient.

**Q: How did you become interested in academic surgery?**

Pursuing academic surgery would allow me to balance both surgery and research. In Portugal, where I studied and started training, it is challenging to engage in academic surgery as a trainee. I hope this changes. In purely clinical work, the number of patients one can have an impact on is often limited. Doing research and developing academic skills is an opportunity for me to potentially impact many more lives and health systems.

**Q: Can you tell us about a project you are working on?**

HIPPO is a global, prospective cohort study which will measure the variation in waiting times of patients undergoing inguinal hernia repair. This is a common benign procedure and was highly affected by the pandemic.

However, there is scarce data characterising global waiting times. Designing, setting up and leading this study has been an amazing learning experience.

**Q: What have been some of the highlights and challenges of your PhD?**

So far, I think designing and leading the HIPPO study and seeing it grow has been the most rewarding aspect. To date, we have captured data on over 7000 patients and it's been an immense learning experience for us all. With respect to challenges, I think time management and prioritisation skills are highest on my list. As someone who is enthusiastic about research, it is easy to join different projects and then realise that not all of them are moving forward as you initially expected. The feeling that a project is on your plate but is not making progress can be challenging.

**Q: What advice would you give to medical students and junior doctors interested in academic surgery?**

I think choosing a team carefully and knowing how they work beforehand is extremely important. Having a good leadership structure to support your academic pathway makes a huge difference. I would also say that being involved in research projects from an early stage will help you decide what you are interested in. Lastly, my advice is to work on challenging projects and to take risks instead of always working within your comfort zone, because it will give you excellent learning experiences.

# UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES



## Surgical Writing and Evidence Practice - Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert)


BJS Institute and The University of Edinburgh are delivering a new online PgCert in Surgical Writing and Evidence Practice. Find out more [here](#).

New online programme

### Surgical Writing and Evidence-Based Practice


Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert)

Delivered by two leading organisations



**THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH**

Leading university with a global reputation and ranked 15th in the world\*



**BJS Institute**

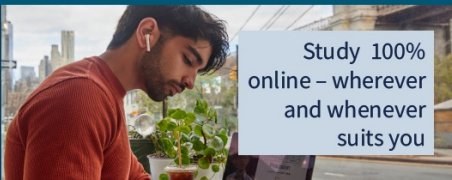
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\*QS World University Rankings 2023

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## UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES



### BJS Academy Essay Writing Competition

BJS Academy, part of our strategic partners BJS Society, are hosting an essay competition for medical students and young trainees.

Essays should be titled "Something I learnt in the operating room" and up to 500 words in length (or a 5-minute video). Please send your submissions to [carol@bjsacademy.com](mailto:carol@bjsacademy.com). Accepted submissions will be shared within the Young BJS section of the BJS Academy website. Find out more [here](#).

### Benefits to our members

As part of our strategic partnership with BJS Society, **STARSurg collaborators have access to a range of exciting benefits & opportunities from BJS** for a minimal annual subscription (£10, €11)! This includes:

#### 1. Online subscription to the BJS journals:

- This will provide full access to all papers across the BJS journals!

#### 2. Access to the upcoming BJS Academy content:

- BJS Academy aims to support the development of current and aspiring surgeons worldwide by championing research and collaboration.
- There will be a huge variety of resources to enhance understanding and conduct of cutting-edge surgical research, including access to recordings of national and international conferences!

#### 3. Membership of the Young BJS initiative:

- This is a growing community of early-career researchers who are interested in surgical academia, with opportunities for mentorship by the BJS editorial team!

You can access these benefits by signing up here:

[bit.ly/starsurgbjs](https://bit.ly/starsurgbjs)

We're looking forward to working with BJS Society over the coming year to make these opportunities as useful as possible to our medical student and junior doctor members!

# UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

## The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh – Courses

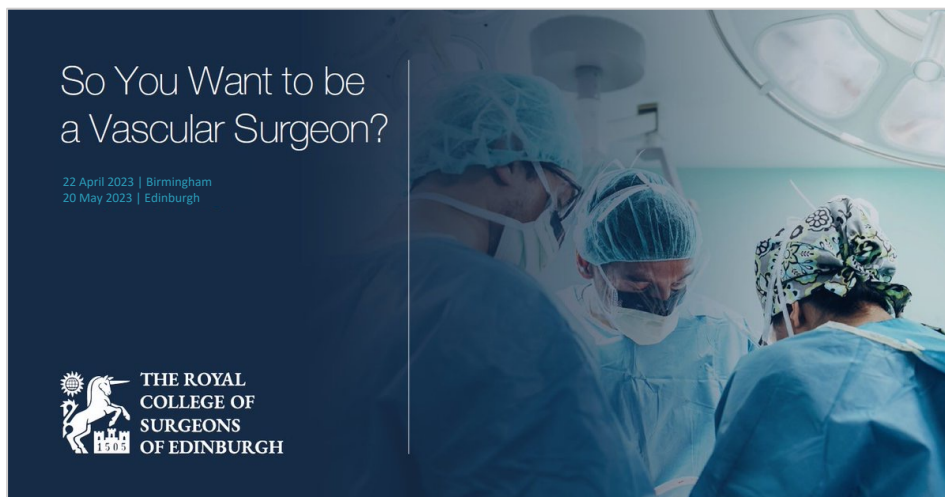


### So You Want to be a Vascular Surgeon?

This is a one-day practical surgical course for medical students delivered by RCSEd in conjunction with Rouleaux Club. The course aims to increase awareness of vascular surgery as a potential career option for undergraduate medical students by:

- Providing an overview of vascular surgery as a career
- Providing **hands-on practical skills experience relevant to vascular surgery**
- Interacting with current trainees and consultants on a small-group level

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023 (Edinburgh) | **Cost:** £10.00 | Find out more [here](#).



### Future Surgeons: Key Skills

This one-day course was designed to address the lack of structured basic surgical skills training courses for medical students intending to follow a career in surgery. It aims to introduce participants to these safe, basic surgical techniques that are common to all surgical practices.

Attendance at this course, will give you the opportunity to apply for a one-year FREE Affiliate Membership with RCSEd.

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> Sep 2023 (Edinburgh) | **Cost:** £110.00 | More locations and course dates to come soon (including: Aberdeen, Birmingham, Cardiff, and Manchester).

Find out more [here](#).



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Strategic partner with BJS Society  
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