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Cancer patients set to benefit from world's largest surgery study

Improved care for patients undergoing cancer surgery is the focus of a pioneering worldwide study, launched today.

Doctors say the initiative – funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) – will enable them to gauge surgery quality across the globe and highlight ways to improve patient care.

Some 16 million people worldwide will be diagnosed with cancer this year. Around 80 per cent of them will need surgery, but success rates vary worldwide and people will not have access to high quality surgical care.

The pioneering study – known as GlobalSurg3 – will pool patient information from hundreds of hospitals to directly compare surgery quality in more than 100 countries across four continents.

Teams of medical professionals at each site will upload patient data for breast, gastric and colon cancer surgeries on a secure online database. They will detail complications such as infections and record death rates following an operation.

The research – launched today at an event attended by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh – is led by the Universities of Edinburgh, Birmingham and Warwick. It is part of the GlobalSurg Collaborative, an international network of more than 5000 medical professionals recruited through social media to pool global healthcare data.

Doctors say the initiative allows low and middle income countries to participate due to its low cost and accessibility.

Project leader Dr Ewen Harrison, Honorary Consultant Surgeon at the University of Edinburgh, said: “Four in five cancer patients will need some form of surgery, however, not all of them will have access to good quality surgical care.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

“We simply do not have a good overview of how surgery varies worldwide. This project aims to change that with its inclusive approach, encouraging any hospital, anywhere, to help us understand how best to improve patient care.”

Dr Theophilus Teddy Kojo Anyomih, a Globalsurg researcher from Tamale Teaching Hospital in Ghana, said: “Our local research capacity in Ghana has improved tremendously since my hospital joined in with GlobalSurg studies. Taking part in GlobalSurg has been amazing and, as a doctor, I have learned a lot since becoming a collaborator. GlobalSurg3 has the potential to make a really positive impact on patients.”

JC Allen Ingabire, a Globalsurg researcher from Kigali Teaching University Hospital in Rwanda, said: “Rwanda is a small country in East Africa where access to surgery is still challenging. The GlobalSurg team has helped me to interact with others on the current management of surgical conditions and establish a way of using data from our daily activities more effectively. Now, all my patients are benefitting from the same standard of care they would receive elsewhere.”

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