SUCCESSFUL NEURSurgery FROM A DISTANCE AT
ROYAL DARWIN HOSPITAL

Thursday 3 September, 2015

Mortality rates for severe head trauma at the Royal Darwin Hospital are down 40 per cent from the 79 per cent rate reported in a Darwin study 10 years ago, according to an article in the latest ANZ Journal of Surgery.

The story in the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) publication details a study that reviewed clinical service between 2008 and 2013. It highlights the continuing challenge of remoteness to the delivery of emergency medicine and surgery in the Top End.

Alcohol remains a major player in hospitalisation, with 57 per cent having evidence of alcohol involvement, and 39 per cent of patients with traumatic brain injury were noted to have alcohol as a factor in their presentations.

Indigenous persons were also over-represented, accounting for 39 per cent of all procedures as well as being considerably younger by a median of 15 years than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Despite the difficulties, General Surgeons at Royal Darwin Hospital are successfully managing emergency neurosurgery, with the help of close relationships with their interstate colleagues.

Resident generalist surgeons are reliant upon dedicated interstate neurosurgeons, who provide ongoing education, training and support, both by way of outreach visits and by 24 hour telephone and teleradiology consultation over 2600km away.

An editorial from esteemed neurosurgeon Professor Jeffrey Rosenfeld applauds the successful co-operation of the two specialties.

“The important take-home messages of this study are that lives can be saved and gratifying outcomes can result by timely neurosurgery performed by general surgeons in remote locations,” Professor Rosenfeld said.

“Further significant improvements in neurosurgery results have occurred at Royal Darwin Hospital following the introduction of rigorous quality assurance and clinical audit mentoring by experienced colleagues and neurosurgical support at a distance.”

Read the editorial and full article.

The ANZ Journal of Surgery, published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region for the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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