The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is urging New Zealand motorists to take care as the road toll for the year to date has already surpassed than the toll for the whole of 2016.

Mr Li Hsee, an Auckland based trauma surgeon and Chair of the RACS NZ Trauma Committee, expressed concern that 2017 was on track to becoming one of the deadliest years for road fatalities in recent history.

“In 2016, 328 people were killed on New Zealand’s roads, making it the worst year we have had since 2010. I find it deeply troubling that we have already exceeded this number in 2017. So far this year 332 people have been killed in road accidents. With the whole of December still to come, and the holiday season being a traditionally busy time on the roads, sadly we can expect this number to increase.”

Earlier this year, RACS opposed the New Zealand Transport Agency’s proposal to increase the speed limit to a maximum of 110km/h on some roads. Against the backdrop of a rising road toll, RACS believes that an increased speed limit is inappropriate and counter-productive.

“Regardless of how well a road has been engineered, at higher speeds you have much less time to react to changing conditions. Humans make mistakes, and there is a very strong correlation between speed and the likelihood of an accident occurring, and that accident resulting in fatal injuries.

This principle applies to all roads in New Zealand, some of which have a speed limit too high for the type and layout of the road,” added Mr Hsee.

He also noted that driver distraction also plays a large role in road accidents.

“Using your cell-phone while driving is extremely risky. It doesn’t matter whether you are checking messages, talking on your phone, or using it to change your music - those few moments of inattention can be fatal.

As a trauma surgeon, my message to all motorists is please be safe. Drive to the conditions, wear a seatbelt, and pay attention to the road. If you have been drinking alcohol or are otherwise impaired, don’t drive.”

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

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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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