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386 A Comparison of Academic Output of Welsh Plastic Surgery Trainees Pre- and Mid-COVID-19 Pandemic

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Aim: The COVID-19 pandemic has affected doctors worldwide, with 1.5 million surgeries being postponed or cancelled in England and Wales during 2020. Surgeons in competitive specialties requiring active research portfolios may have used this time to strengthen their academic work. This cross-sectional study provides insight into the academic output of Welsh plastic surgery trainees during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could be used to highlight contributing factors to benefit future training.

Method: A cross-sectional study was distributed to all Welsh burns and plastic surgery trainees from specialty trainee levels 3–8. Data was obtained comparing publications achieved, abstracts submitted, and

projects undertaken pre-pandemic, March 1st to 31st August 2019 and mid-pandemic, March 1st to 31st August 2020.

Results: Of the 12 Welsh plastic surgery trainees, 75% participated in this survey, with representation from all years of training. Mid-pandemic, an average of 3 publications were achieved per trainee when compared with 1.4 pre-pandemic. 78% submitted abstracts during both periods, increasing from 1.5 to 2.44 mid-pandemic. Although the average number of projects undertaken pre- and mid-pandemic was 3.2 and 3.1 respectively, the number of trainees undertaking projects increased by 22% to 100%. Most commonly, this was attributed to an increase in capacity.

Conclusions: Our study demonstrated that overall, academic output increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unsurprisingly, this sudden decrease in surgical activity led to trainees in this highly competitive specialty employing their time towards research. Further studies investigating the factors enabling trainees to increase their academic productivity would be beneficial as routine surgical activity resumes.