

GP-Surgeons Connect

Linking GPs with surgical advice during COVID-19
pandemic crisis



PROGRAMME AIM

- To rapidly connect GPs and others in primary care with surgical experts to increase the number of patients with surgical conditions who can be managed in the community by providing doctor-to-doctor advice.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

- The RCSI, National Clinical Programme for Surgery, and ICGP is establishing a GP support programme that will offer quick access to consultative advice from a surgical advisory panel.
- RCSI have a panel of surgeon advisors all of whom are on the Specialist Division of the Medical Register who have agreed to provide phone advice to GPs. The advice will be provided by the surgeon advisor direct to GPs to support them in the management of patients in the community or to assist in the decision to escalate the patients care to the hospital setting.
- Requests from GPs will be centrally coordinated by the team in the National Clinical Programme in Surgery and the appropriate expert will aim to respond directly to the GPs within one hour of the original request being received.
- All the details of the programme can be found through rcsi.com/surgery/connect

USING THE SERVICE

IN SCOPE

- DIRECT CALLS OR REQUESTS FROM GENERAL PRACTITIONERS.

OUT OF SCOPE

- CALLS OR REQUESTS FROM NON GENERAL PRACTITIONERS.
- CALLS OR REQUESTS FROM PATIENTS
- ROUTINE FOLLOW-UP REQUESTS

- The virtual call centre will be manned 8-6 Monday to Friday and will offer the GPs a number of contact pathways, these are:

WEB FORM

A live web form that they can complete.

rcsi.com/surgery/connect

PHONE

A direct line telephone number.

01- 402 2500

EMAIL

A manned email address.

Surgeonsconnect@rcsi.ie

The extension of the service to OOH and weekends will be considered following a review of the initial service and capacity to do so.

GUIDANCE FOR GPs AND SURGEONS USING THE SERVICE

We recommend phone calls follow the **ISBAR** format for ease of communication (Introduction, Situation, Background, Assessment and Recommendation)

INTRODUCTION Each participant should introduce themselves by name and specialty.

SITUATION The GP should provide a full clinical history and relevant findings on clinical examination.

BACKGROUND Where possible, a relevant past history and medication history should be available. Any recent illnesses or operations are especially relevant factors.

ASSESSMENT The GP should present his/her assessment of the situation and the clinical questions they want guidance on.

RECOMMENDATIONS from the surgeon might include advice about treatment and follow-up or advice that the patient should be referred using existing pathways, such as a local OPD, ASAU or ED service.

If you make a **RECOMMENDATION** about treatment, it is important to also provide clear information about:

- how to evaluate the impact of the treatment
- how long it is safe to continue treatment before escalating to an ED visit (if relevant)
- when to suspect treatment is not working or other red flags

CLINICAL GOVERNANCE

- The duty of care to the patient remains with the GP, who will consider the surgical advice they receive alongside all other relevant factors and make a judgement about ongoing care of their patient.
- Surgeons will not speak directly to the patient and should not take on any ongoing duty of care. If a patient requires review or follow-up, GPs are free to make another call to the service, or to refer the patient using their existing referral networks.
- When the consultation is complete please send an email to surgeonsconnect@rcsi.ie with the consultation referral code and one of three conclusions ADVICE, REFER OPD, REFER ED. No patient or GP information should be included in this email.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (CONTD.)

➤ RCSI

The panel will be compiled and governed by the RCSI

- All surgeons will be registered with the medical council and will be on the SDR

- All surgeons will identify their surgical specialty interest

- All surgeons will work to the protocols established by RCSI

RCSI will organise and maintain the panel of surgeons with all relevant contact details and only use surgeons registered on the RCSI panel.

RCSI will maintain a log of all calls received and returned but will not be taking any patient details. This will be just to monitor activity and ensure capacity meets demand.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

➤ Surgeon panel

Surgical experts on the RCSI panel will not be required to maintain a record of their advice, this will be the responsibility of the GP. The surgical advice is only to help guide best actions to be taken by GPs

Each panel member will be provided with full professional indemnity from the State Claims Agency as they will be working on behalf of the HSE. In some cases surgeons will already be working in the HSE or Hospitals covered by the SCA.

Each panel member will be responsible to ask the relevant questions of the GP as per normal clinical practice and provide advice accordingly. This will include advice that the GP should consider sending the patient to hospital for an examination by the clinical team.

Panel members will not interview or discuss with patients. All communication shall be with the GP only.

Panel members will not be required to follow up.

GP

Duty of care will remain with the GP at all stages and the surgical expert will not be responsible for follow up.