

RCSI PROGRESS Women in Surgery Fellowship supported by Johnson & Johnson

FELLOWSHIP REPORT: MS AILÍN ROGERS FRCSI

Fellowship: Robotic and exenterative surgery for advanced pelvic cancer at
the Royal Marsden Hospital, London

January 2022

Ms Ailín Rogers FRCSI: inaugural recipient PROGRESS Women in Surgery Fellowship supported by Johnson & Johnson

The ROYAL MARSDEN
NHS Foundation Trust



Fellowship: Robotic and exenterative surgery for advanced pelvic cancer



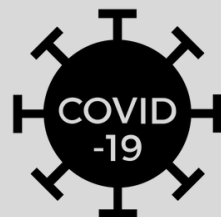
Award: €45,000 Educational Fellowship by RCSI supported by Johnson & Johnson



Surgical skills: performed >400 cancer operations, including >120 robotic surgeries, >40 pelvic exenterations, >70 pelvic side wall



Location: Royal Marsden, London



Duration: 12 month duration from July 2020, and during Covid-19



Leadership: developed essential non-operative leadership, management & teamwork skills



PROGRESS: Ms Ailín Rogers was appointed Consultant Surgeon at Mater Hospital & Our Lady's Hospital Navan on completion of her Fellowship

INTRODUCTION: ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO PROGRESSION

RCSI has a long tradition of excellence in surgical training. Our surgeons, male and female, have over many decades, earned leading positions in institutions across the world.

The College has been at the forefront in developing transparent selection processes for future surgeons. But despite more than 20 years of gender parity among medical graduates, female consultant surgeon numbers in Ireland remain very low. Evidence from other sectors shows that gender diversity within organisations results in better decision making. RCSI believes that surgery as a profession will also benefit by ensuring the unique contribution of male and female surgeons is valued and enabled.

In 2017 RCSI undertook to publish a comprehensive report 'PROGRESS: Promoting Gender Equality in Surgery,' which highlights the scale of the problem and seeks to make meaningful recommendations that will ensure that surgery as a profession is an attractive and practical career for both men and women. RCSI champions the provision of fellowships and programmes that advance female role models as they will do much to break down barriers and unlock the potential of women in surgery.

The RCSI PROGRESS Female Surgical Fellowship, funded by Johnson & Johnson Medical Devices Companies, is a prestigious bursary awarded by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland to promote female participation in surgical training at fellowship level that will support the acquisition of additional surgical skills and knowledge contributing to the advancement of surgical science and practice on the island of Ireland.

We are delighted to share this Fellowship Report from Ms Ailín Rogers FRCSI, the inaugural PROGRESS Women in Surgery Fellowship, funded by Johnson & Johnson Medical Devices Companies.

Introducing Ms Ailín Rogers FRCSI: inaugural recipient of the PROGRESS Women in Surgery Fellowship, funded by Johnson & Johnson Medical Devices Companies

Ms Rogers graduated from UCD in 2007 and completed MRCS before pursuing a PhD with UCD and Yale University, which she was awarded in 2013. With RCSI, she then completed Higher Surgical Training in General Surgery, achieving FRCSI in 2019.

She is a strong advocate for women surgeons and female role models, with studies on gender in surgery published in top ranked surgical journals. She sat on the RCSI committee for gender diversity in surgery, leading to the production of the PROGRESS report. She advocates for her peers as the past-president of the Irish Surgical Training Group and has a keen interest in mentorship and career guidance for trainees, having set up an annual career guidance day for aspiring surgeons, and was instrumental in the recent RCSI mentorship working group.

She has postgraduate qualifications in statistics, leadership and healthcare economics, over 50 peer-reviewed publications, three book chapters, has presented nationally and internationally on more than 60 occasions, and has been awarded over €150,000 in grant and prize funding.

She completed fellowship training in robotic colorectal surgery and multivisceral resection for advanced pelvic malignancy in the Royal Marsden Hospital, London and returns to Ireland to her family and to commence consultancy in the Mater Hospital and Our Lady's Hospital Navan.



Fellowship in robotic and exenterative surgery for advanced pelvic cancer in the Royal Marsden Hospital, London

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The Royal Marsden Hospital, London is a high volume quaternary referral centre which delivers multidisciplinary cancer care to patients with advanced pelvic malignancies, with particular focus on multivisceral and complex pelvic cancers. The high volume case load allows for intense exposure to open, laparoscopic and robotic techniques. This unique fellowship focused on the open and robotic approaches to the pelvis, working in the TME, beyond TME and urogynaecological planes.

Ms Ailín Rogers, front, pictured with colleagues at the Royal Marsden, London

Fellowship Report: Clinical Summary

Ailín trained in open and robotic pelvic exenterations, sacrectomies, as well as sentinel and side wall node dissection, RPLND and with the opportunity to operate both with colorectal surgeons, as well as urologists and gynaecologists, in order to train for these multidisciplinary cases at the interface of surgical specialties. She was an active participant in departmental research and the multidisciplinary meetings where she learned key decision making strategies.

In choosing Royal Marsden Hospital for her fellowship destination, she travelled from Dublin to London for 12 months, leaving her husband in Dublin to care for their two sons (aged 4 and 10 months). The PROGRESS Fellowship award supported a safe and comfortable accommodation and allowed Ailín to travel back and forth as frequently as possible, ensuring an optimal balance between fellowship and life commitments, and meant that she never had to be in the difficult position of being unable to afford to travel to see her family.

Ailín gained invaluable experience operating as primary surgeon on a range of advanced pelvic pathologies in a specialised unit. The additional benefit was accessing high-volume robotic surgery, with two dual console Da Vinci Xi robots with simulators, in use 5 days a week.

The range of urological and gynaecological surgeries much increased her access to robotic surgery, under the supervision of a team of fellowship trained consultants. Over the year, Ailín was involved with over 400 cancer operations, spending dedicated time gaining proficiency in robotic urological and gynaecology procedures as index cases (prostatectomy, cystectomy, pelvic lymph node dissection, TAH/BSO and sentinel and side wall lymph node dissection). She also learned RPLND and ileal conduit formation – more skills useful for advanced and recurrent pelvic cancer surgery. This approach of multidisciplinary training is unique and offered Ailín access to training volume, techniques and a greater assurance of anatomical understanding than purely colorectal training has previously been afforded.



Fellowship Report: Impact

Ms Ailín Rogers FRCSI:

“This Fellowship was **undoubtedly the best professional year of my career** to date, with the opportunity to hone my technical skills and truly focus on studying the art of surgery. Most importantly, I hugely enjoyed working with the RMH team and others in London. I now hold many new but enduring professional and personal relationships which have already yielded important personal and professional supports to me as I embark on my Consultant career. I know that there are a variety of highly skilled professionals that I can seek advice from and collaborate with in the future. The award allowed me to live in a safe and comfortable area near the hospital and to travel to see my family within Covid-19 regulations.”

For future for Irish patients:

“The skills, maturity and experience I have gained have undoubtedly made me a **better surgeon in my new role as Consultant Surgeon**. I now feel I am a competent robotic surgeon and have increased my skillset for managing advanced pelvic cancers substantially, which will be a bonus for my patients. I also have created contacts within quaternary referral centres, whom I know I can pick up the phone to at any time should I wish to refer or seek advice from them in difficult cases. I hope to provide registrar and fellowship training to surgical trainees (both Irish and international), so that they might benefit as I did. I really so much enjoyed the collaborative and multidisciplinary nature of my Fellowship, and will endeavour to promote a similar model of fellowship in Ireland.”

Promoting a career for women in surgery:

“This year, I chose to travel away from my husband and two small children to pursue this Fellowship. I could not have done it without my incredibly supportive family, but I truly believe that the PROGRESS Fellowship award made it so much easier. I strongly believe in the **"you can't be what you can't see"** adage and I have been lucky enough to be part of a generation of women who have broken the mould in surgical training; I have a stable relationship with two small children and family commitments and yet achieved academic and clinical success. **I hope this in itself can promote other women to follow the path I have chosen.**

With so many other issues going on, not least Covid-19, being free from financial worries made the Fellowship seem a much easier feat. I knew I could see my family if needed and yet I felt safe and comfortable in London. While it may have seemed like a large personal undertaking, it actually felt quite easy and enjoyable. I was able to immerse myself 100% in work during the week, and focus 100% on family during downtime. This luxury is more difficult to maintain when balancing work and life in the same geographical region, but I learned that it is possible to leave work behind and give family true focus and vice versa. I hope that what I have done this year will inspire more women to do similar, and demonstrate that there are creative ways to balance work and life, with the right supports.



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