Enhanced Skills: Surgical Skills

OVERVIEW

Information about the Enhanced Skills Surgical (ESS) program is complex, because in Canada, “GP Surgery” is a complicated and political topic.

There has been a national working party for ESS that has developed strategies in four different arenas:

1) There is now a national curriculum for ESS that has been accepted at the College of Family Physician’s level (a summarized version of this curriculum was published in December 2015: http://canjsurg.ca/vol58-issue6/58-6-419/). There is also a curriculum in operative delivery that is endorsed by The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC).

2) ESS is now a “community of practice” in the College of Family Physicians of Canada. The CFPC Board has accepted ESS as one of the next communities of practice to develop a Certificate of Added Competence (CAC). This will lead to a Category 1 training program for accreditation. (Currently ESS would be accredited as a Category 2 program)

3) A joint position statement regarding surgery in rural Canada has been published: http://www.srpc.ca/PDF/cjrm/vol20n4/pg129.pdf

The signing parties include: Canadian Association of General Surgery (CAGS), SOGC, SRPC, CFPC

4) The fourth arena is the most political and the most challenging and this is working with health authorities around the issue of privileging and credentialing.

This detail is provided because one has to understand the political landscape in order to decide on moving forward in ESS training.

In collaboration with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, we have a six-month program in place for operative delivery. Having the skills to provide operative delivery is very important in sustaining rural maternity services in Canada, however, often cannot be maintained in isolation. There needs to be partnership with surgical services in order to maintain a functioning OR. There is a substantial growing body of evidence that suggests that rural maternity services cannot be maintained without the other surgical piece.

A full one-year program for ESS remains tentative at this time. The curriculum includes surgical obstetrics plus various modules in general surgery with cross call coverage over the course of the year.

Privileges are the largest challenge. There is no point in taking a year to train for a set of competencies that will never be put to use because the health authority refuses to provide the privileges or to support the services. One of the pre-requisites to entering the program is having both a community commitment (addressing community needs) and health authority commitment. In Canada, the only ESS program that has been consistently running is in Prince Albert. Graduates from the Prince Albert program have had difficulty getting privileges for their surgical skills in parts of Alberta. The North Zone in Alberta is very supportive and is in fact trying to re-open programs if the appropriate manpower could be found. Having an Alberta based program using a nationally recognized accredited program would overcome many barriers.

An important part to obtaining privileges and maintaining them is a mentorship relationship with the referral community of surgeons, regardless of what community one is practicing in.

APPLICATION

To discuss application to this program, contact Dr. Fred Janke directly.

For more information, please contact:

Dr. Fred Janke  
Co-Program Director  
PGY3 Surgical Skills  
Family Medicine Residency Program  
fred.janke@ualberta.ca