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Outdated technology costs UK surgeons an entire month of workday hours per year

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- Nearly four in five surgeons say care would be easier to deliver with improved technology.

[A survey of 300 UK surgeons](#) has found that each surgeon loses an average of four hours a week due to inefficient technology. This is equal to more than an entire working month of hours each year.

The study, “State of Surgery in the UK: Technology and Efficiency in Patient Care,” conducted on behalf of global healthcare technology leader Medtronic, reveals 79% of UK surgeons feel care would be easier to deliver if technology was improved.

The study explores surgeons’ attitudes towards the technologies they use in their role, the efficiency of them and the degree to which they enhance or hinder performance. Fifty-four percent of surgeons reported spending time outside of hospital hours on administration that could be automated, and 58% agree technology in the operating room is inefficient and could impact the delivery of patient care.

Professor Naeem Soomro, Royal College of Surgeons Council member, Vice Chair of QA operational group, Vice Chair 'Future of Surgery', Deputy Lead Cancer Surgery, commented:

“The Royal College of Surgeons of England has long recognised the administrative and logistical burdens on surgeons, and the impact this can have on surgical practice and training. These findings validate and mirror our own research highlighting that the future of surgery lies in more forward-facing digital solutions. Robotics, data and artificial intelligence will allow the NHS to respond to current challenges around access, safety and sustainability of healthcare.”

One application of technology this research examined is surgical video – widely used by surgeons to benefit postoperative debriefing,¹⁻³ coaching,⁴⁻⁷ and skill improvement.⁸

Professor Sanjay Purkayastha, Consultant Upper GI and Bariatric Surgeon at Imperial College, NHS Healthcare

Trust, and Honorary Professor at Brunel University, commented on the impact of a more connected operating room on healthcare systems:

“The survey results reflect a challenge that many of us in the surgical community know all too well. For many surgeons, the lack of adequate technological support throughout the patient pathway leaves the surgical team perpetually short on time. Time that could be used on crucial analysis and training. An upgrade in the technologies available to surgeons is long overdue.

“The enhanced efficiency and accuracy we gain from a more integrated and intelligent operating room are undeniable. In surgery, the benefits of being proactive, rather than reactive, are critical to maintaining a high quality of care. Digital technologies will be key to sustaining this. Unfortunately, these benefits remain out of reach for far too many in our field.”

Forty-six percent of surgeons surveyed believe recording surgeries is important for performance analysis and improvement. Yet of those surveyed, 42% point to outdated technology as a barrier when recording these videos.

“The results of this study clearly demonstrate that outdated technology is holding surgeons back every single day,” said George Murgatroyd, general manager and vice president of Digital Technologies within the Surgical business of Medtronic. “Smart and easy-to-use technology is already benefitting people’s everyday lives, and a similar digital evolution is long overdue in healthcare.”

“By empowering surgeons with digital solutions, we have a tremendous opportunity to address these inefficiencies and save surgeons time,” said Murgatroyd. “Digital solutions alone will not solve all the challenges our NHS is facing, but without updating the technologies in our operating theatres, surgeons, their teams, and ultimately patients, will continue to be let down.”

The study also found 56% of surgeons agreed time spent on administrative and logistical tasks could be reduced with better technology. Fifty-five percent of surgeons said the time saved on administrative work could be used to upskill and learn new surgical techniques, with 53% saying they would have more time for pre- and postoperative consultations with patients. Forty-two percent said they would use this extra time for training teams.

For full survey data including breakdown by regions, area of practice, length of service and public-private practice, a data summary report and other media assets, [click here](#).

Survey methodology:

The survey was conducted from 1st March to 15th April 2023, with a target audience of surgeons and medical practitioners from various specialisations within both public and private healthcare sectors in the UK. Responses were received from 300 surgeons across 21 regions and cities. The survey was carried out by Censuswide on behalf of Medtronic.

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