

# THE CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING SYSTEM FOR SURGERY (CORESS)



## coress

College is supporting the work of a confidential reporting system for surgery - CORESS ([www.coress.org.uk](http://www.coress.org.uk)).  
Programme Director, Professor Frank CT Smith, explains its purpose.

**T**he purpose of CORESS is, exclusively, to share lessons learnt from unexpected or adverse incidents in surgical practice.

At a time when the 'blame industry' is in overdrive, defensive practice is ever more common and bureaucracy is overwhelming us, do surgeons really need another incident reporting system? This was the very reasonable question put to the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland (ASGBI) when CORESS was proposed in 2006. The answer, of course, was that if the proposal was simply another layer in the clinical governance framework, then it was unlikely to succeed. So, what is different about this reporting system?

CORESS is similar to a system set up for aviation in 1982 following several high-profile accidents. When CORESS was devised, the organisation was assisted by the chief executive and his team at the aviation system (CHIRP) and although there are differences between systems suitable for aviation and surgery, the principles under which the system should operate remain the same.

Firstly, there must be complete confidentiality between the reporter and the system. Confidence in the integrity of the system is essential in this respect. Next, the educational value of feedback both to the reporter and to the professional body concerned must be excellent. For there to be confidence in the credibility of feedback, any panel of

'experts' must include people of acknowledged distinction who actively practice their profession. Lastly, confidence in the system by those interested but not directly involved is essential.

These systems are complementary to existing statutory, professional and organisational measures for the protection of the public and do not replace them. The necessary support of regulatory bodies and society in general is dependent on this being made very clear. These principles are embodied in the operating framework of CORESS, which became an independent charity, introduced by Sir Bruce Keogh at the House of Lords in 2010.

CORESS is a service provided by surgeons for surgeons and is concerned with any safety-related issue from which lessons can be learned. Any surgeon, surgical trainee, or member of the wider surgical team, irrespective of specialty, can submit reports, in confidence, to CORESS. Reports can be made online at [www.coress.org.uk](http://www.coress.org.uk) or by mail, using a form which can be downloaded from the same website. Reports may concern any safety-related incident involving the reporter, other people, a hospital or other organisations that the reporter deals with. Incidents may be diagnostic or operative errors, technical or maintenance failures, regulatory or procedural aspects or unsafe practices and/or protocols.

Useful lessons may often be learned from incidents which do not result in adverse consequences and may only be known to the reporter. However, there is no educational value in incidents where no lesson can be learned. Incidents

with no safety content or issues involving conflicts of personalities and problems involving industrial relations or terms and conditions of employment are not, generally, useful.

Confidentiality is fundamental to the concept of the CORESS service. On receipt of a report, it is transferred to a stand-alone computer with no wired or wireless connections to any network. Identifying data are available only to the programme director. All identifiable data are removed before a report is reviewed by an advisory committee of experts in the appropriate specialty all of whom have signed a confidentiality agreement. If useful lessons can be learned, an unidentifiable version is incorporated in a feedback document. All reports are anonymised and identifying data is securely deleted from the CORESS system before any feedback publication. Contributors are provided with a "Certificate of Contribution to Surgical Safety", which may be useful evidence for training or appraisal portfolios. Previous reports may be found on the CORESS website.

How does CORESS contribute to safety? Unlike mandatory reporting systems CORESS does not systematically analyse and feedback information to NHS organisations. Rather, CORESS aims to complement this activity by providing individual feedback to surgeons and to the surgical community in general. If you have lessons which may benefit the surgical community please consider sharing them with CORESS.

## APPLICATIONS SOUGHT FOR THE POST OF CORESS (CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING SYSTEM FOR SURGERY) PROGRAMME DIRECTOR-ELECT

CORESS (Confidential Reporting System for Surgery) invites applications for the post of Programme Director-Elect.

The role of Programme Director-Elect will be to work with as deputy, and to assimilate and take on the role of the current Programme Director, with anticipated appointment of the successful applicant to the post of Programme Director within 6-12 months. The term of appointment of the new appointee will be 4 years, to include the period spent as Programme Director-Elect.

Key responsibilities of the post are to liaise with the 10 surgical specialty associations to solicit reports of adverse incidents and near misses in surgical practice, which are published and disseminated to the surgical workforce as anonymised educational vignettes and presentations. The role of Programme Director involves chairing the pan-specialty Advisory Board, liaising with other organisations involved in patient safety including the surgical Royal Colleges, NHS England Patient Safety, HSIB, the MRHA, and MDU. The successful applicant will be involved in, and will eventually direct, the strategic development of the charity and its educational programmes

and aspirations. The Programme Director reports to the Board of Trustees chaired by the Lord Ribeiro CBE FRCS.

It is expected that the applicant will be in good standing as a medical practitioner with experience as a committee chair, interests in surgical education, a proven track record of organisational skills and published outputs. Presentation skills and familiarity with charitable governance will be an advantage.

This post represents an excellent opportunity for an individual with interests in surgical education, patient safety and quality improvement. This post is an honorary appointment, but all reasonable expenses will be refunded with oversight by the Hon. Treasurer and Board of Trustees.

**The formal application pack is available from:**  
[admin@coress.org.uk](mailto:admin@coress.org.uk)

**The closing date for applications will be**  
**10 December 2021.**

**Applicants interested in the role can contact the current Programme Director for further information.**