



Association of Breast Surgery
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Message from the ABS President

Dear Colleagues

On behalf of myself and the Trustees we would like to thank you for all your continued hard work for our breast patients under very trying circumstances.

We have recently taken soundings from regional reps around the country and while the picture is very mixed there is undoubtedly huge strain on the system.

Many units are having reductions in their operating lists, and most routine surgery is now cancelled with a concentration on cancers and 'P2' surgery, with some areas struggling to deliver even this. This is often necessitating shared waiting lists with a diminution of continuity of care. Some units are again having to use bridging endocrine therapy.

Meanwhile new referrals remain very high, and are not always of good quality.

Clinical research too is compromised and some areas still cannot recruit to clinical trials or open any new ones.

The recovery from the pandemic has been patchy, and this new wave of admissions has once again exposed structural difficulties in the NHS, which are challenging our ability to provide safe cancer care.

In some areas it is proving impossible to meet the cancer targets, through no fault of our own, and yet somehow it feels like our fault. Not being able to provide the excellent care we normally provide is both uncomfortable and disheartening.

One surgeon responded simply 'tired and depressed'.

Once again thank you, and from my role in various different forums and with different specialties it is clear that we are actually doing better than many, if not most. The fact that so many breast operations can be done as day cases helps, but above all else the focus we all have on good quality care for our patients and our determination to provide that makes all the difference.

If you are struggling, do get in touch. We have a [list of members](#) who have volunteered to help mentor and support you. Please do not suffer in silence.

Meanwhile if required please prioritise patients according to clinical need and consider bridging endocrine therapy for the strongly ER positive, post-menopausal patients when lists are not available.

Do get in touch if we can help, we have a huge amount of expertise and experience in our ranks, and we are here to support you.

Best Wishes

Chris Holcombe
ABS President

29th September 2021