

## **“Surgical training and research in the Netherlands”**

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In contrast to many other countries, training of medical specialists is funded by the Department of Health. The curriculum of medical specialist training including general surgery is well structured and lasts 5-6 years. Specialist (trainers) and hospitals involved in surgical training have been accredited by the Dutch Association of Surgeons. Surgical training includes 4 years of general surgery followed by two years of differentiation in one of the sub-specialities. These are gastrointestinal, oncological, vascular, pediatric and trauma surgery. The training program is competency based: there are key procedures and so called EPA (entrusted professional activities) that are defined to monitor the progress of an individual. Unique in the Dutch system is the quality control and governance of surgical training that will be discussed in my lecture.

The number of positions available for surgical trainees is limited and determined by the government each year. Hence, to enter surgical training has always been very competitive and not easy for young doctors. This is one of the reasons why many students start a PhD program after medical school and to gain experience in basic or clinical research. These young and talented students usually work for 3-4 years full time and are well capable of coordinating trials. This is just one of the reasons that many clinical (randomised) studies come from the Netherlands. Besides this strong academic environment, lack of private practice, strong multidisciplinary working parties and the geographical situation in our small country facilitates multicenter studies. Some more crucial factors for success will be discussed in the lecture.