**Statement in response to sexual assault in surgery publication and testimonials**

7th January 2022

In a joint statement, Mr Simon Kendall, President of the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgery, and Ms Karen Booth, Co-Chair of the Women in Cardiothoracic Surgery Sub-committee, said:

'We stand strong with the surgical community in our shock and outrage by the testimonials of sexual assault in the surgical workplace that are being shared on Twitter in response to the article [*Sexual assault in surgery: a painful truth*](https://publishing.rcseng.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1308/rcsbull.2021.106) by S Fleming and RA Fisher, published in the September *Bulletin,*and the [letter to the authors](https://publishing.rcseng.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1308/rcsbull.2022.5) submitted in response by Philippa Jackson*.*

Behaviours that allow for bullying and harassment of any member of the healthcare profession undermine the patient’s confidence in the care they receive and are well documented to negatively affect patient outcomes.

We all come to work to provide the highest standard of care in what we all hope is a mutually kind and supportive environment. We as an organisation stand against any form of discrimination from patients, staff members or NHS organisations in which our health professionals work. It is not acceptable.

The standard we walk past is the standard we accept as a community. It is extremely difficult to speak out and challenge any behaviour and we applaud Phillippa Jackson and others who share their stories.

We want to reassure our membership, the recent creation of WICTS and the **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Committee** has been to promote a healthy culture change within specialty, one which allows for a safe space to discuss such issues.  We are working on gathering data to assess the extent to which our own specialty is affected and we would like to offer our contact email address if any member would like support or an ear to listen without reproach - please contact the Women in Cardiothoracic Surgery group on sctswicts@gmailcom

Should you wish to read the article and responses in full, see link

<https://publishing.rcseng.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1308/rcsbull.2021.106>

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|  | [Sexual assault in surgery: a painful truth | The Bulletin of the Royal College of Surgeons of England](https://publishing.rcseng.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1308/rcsbull.2021.106)  This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.  publishing.rcseng.ac.uk |

 If you experience or witness sexual harassment or assault in the workplace please report it to your Trust and to the police. There is information available from [Citizens Advice](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/) about the process and your rights. If you need advice on the legal process, or need emotional support from a trained counsellor, RCS England provides a 24/7 Confidential Support and Advice Service – the helpline can be reached on 020 7869 6221.