



# A public poll on the word 'surgeon'

June 2012

**PATIENTLIAISONGROUP**  
of The Royal College of Surgeons of England

# Foreword from Susan Woodward, Chair of the RCS Patient Liaison Group

With patients increasingly able to choose their treatments from a growing range of healthcare professionals there is a growing need for clarity on the level of training, skills and experience of those who treat them.

Job titles convey much of this information in a simple and direct manner, which is essential in order to enable a patient to provide informed consent and have confidence in the treatment he or she is receiving.

Worryingly, clarity regarding job titles in the health sector can often be lacking, and in the case of surgery in particular there are no legal restrictions about who can be called a 'surgeon'.

The Patient Liaison Group (PLG) has been concerned about this issue for some time and commissioned this poll in order to gain an understanding of the public perception of the word 'surgeon' and the expectations that accompany this title in terms of education and training.

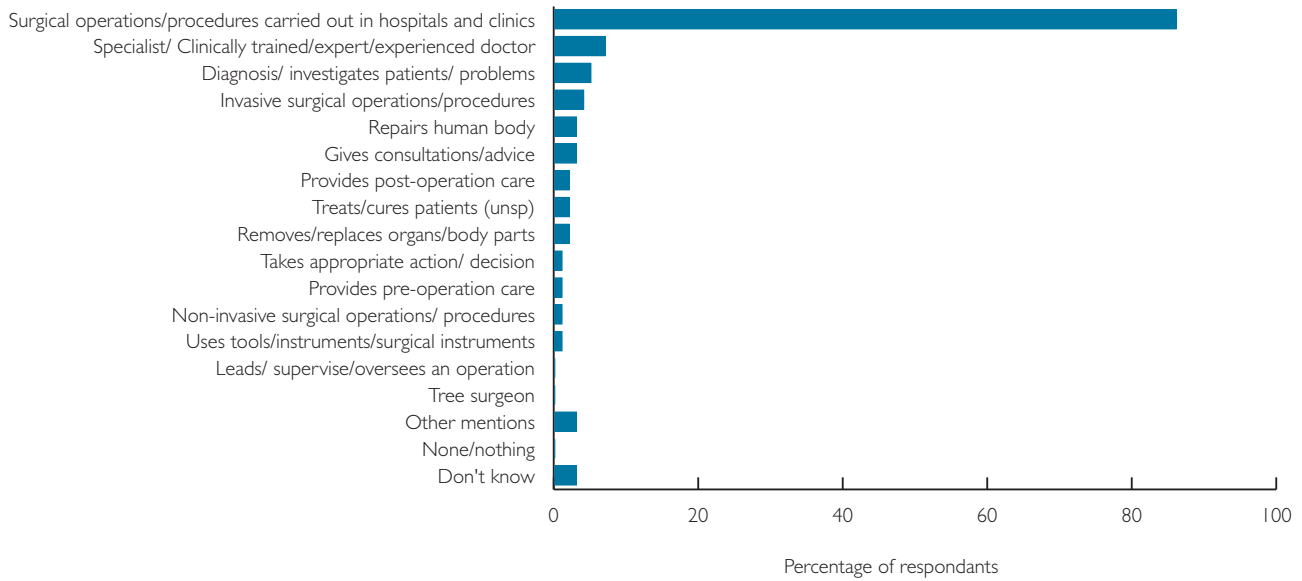
The poll results indicate a resounding public consensus on these issues, sharing our high degree of concern that there are surgeons providing treatment in the NHS who do not hold medical degrees and who are not surgical specialists.

With the clear call to action in the poll, the PLG will be taking this issue forward by campaigning for the job title of 'surgeon' in healthcare to be protected by law, in the same manner that 'dentist' is currently protected. We believe that without this clarification, patients cannot make sufficiently informed decisions about their treatment.

ICM interviewed a random sample of 2,034 adults aged 18+ in Great Britain online between 22 and 24 June 2012. Surveys were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. For further information please visit [www.icmresearch.com](http://www.icmresearch.com)

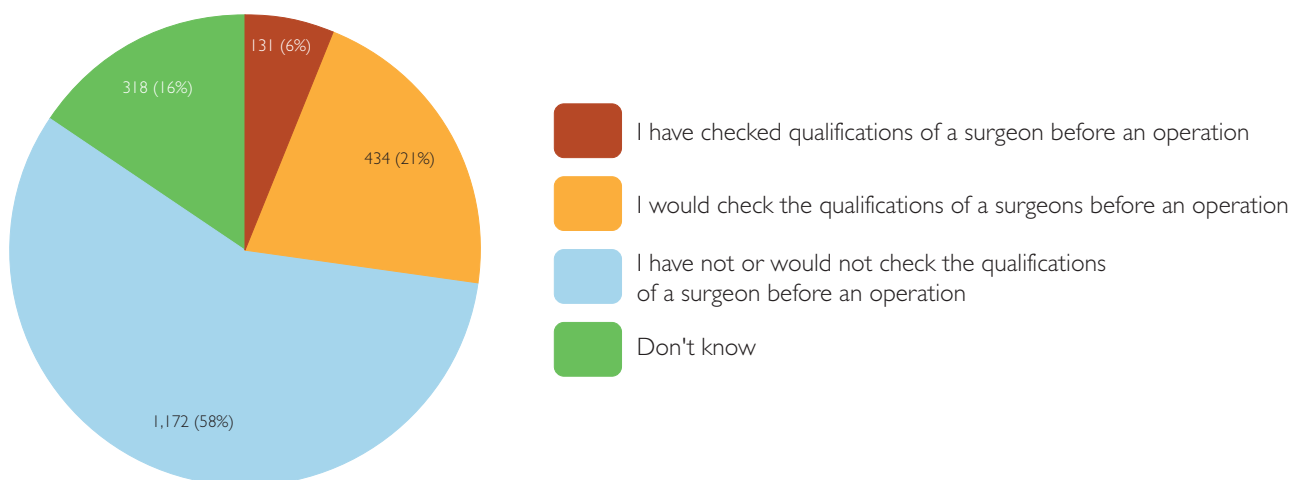
# Q1

## What do you think a surgeon does?

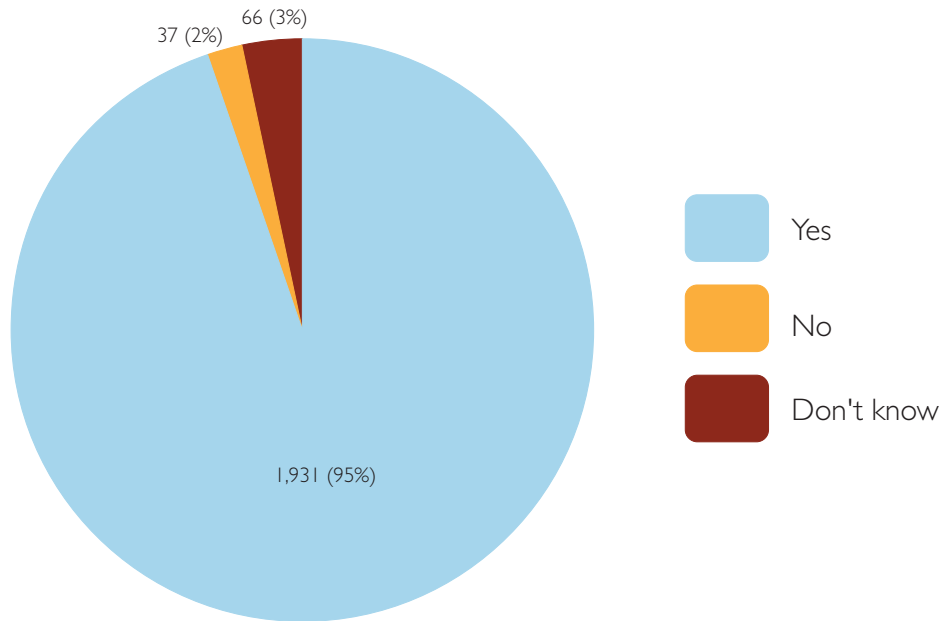


# Q2

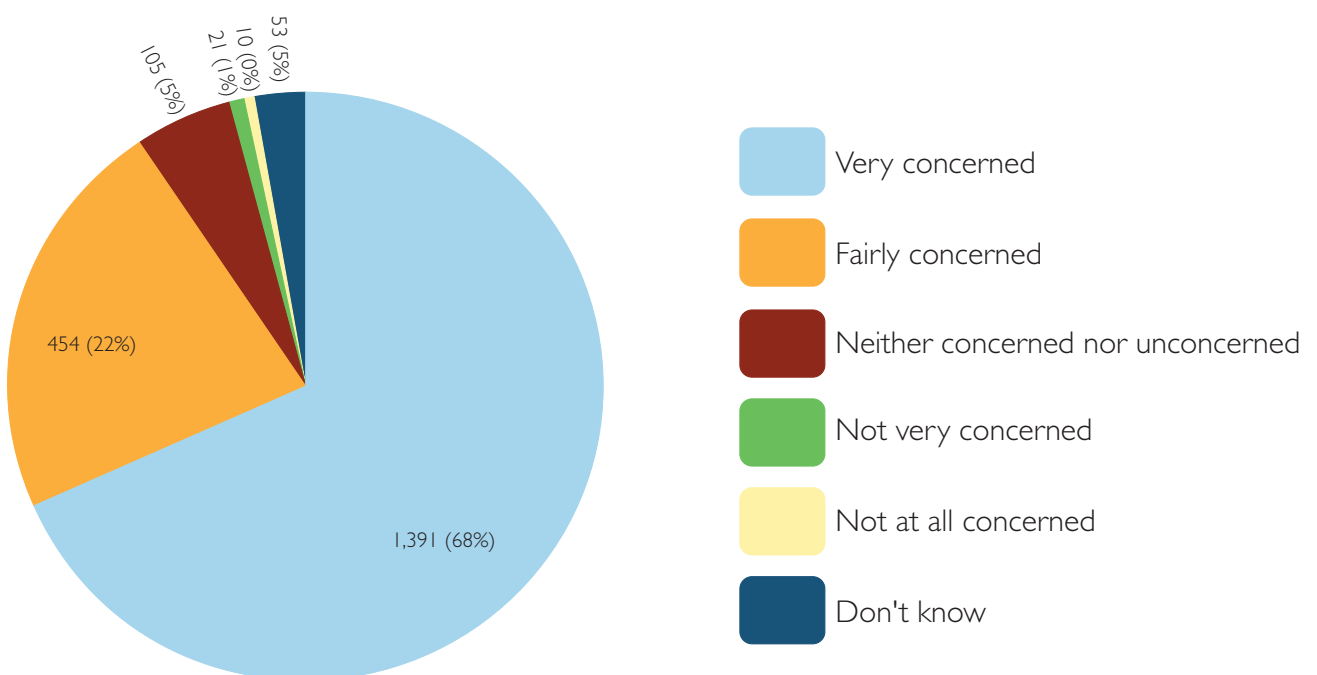
## Have you checked or would you check the qualifications of a surgeon before consenting to an operation from that surgeon?



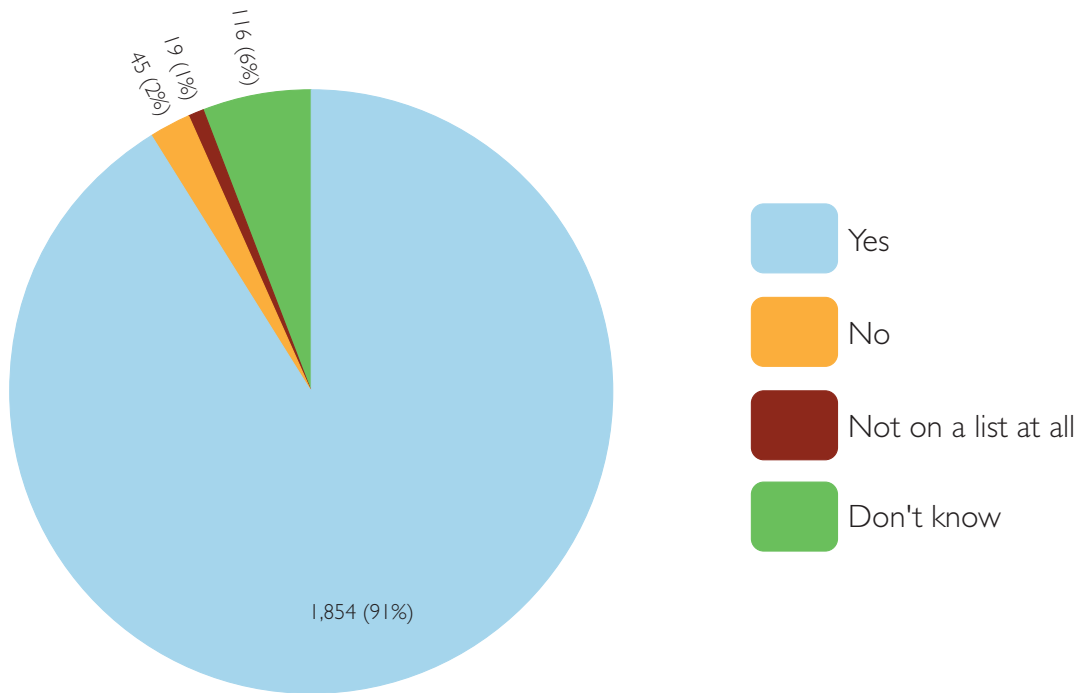
### Q3 Would you expect a surgeon to have a medical degree? ie a degree obtained from a medical school.



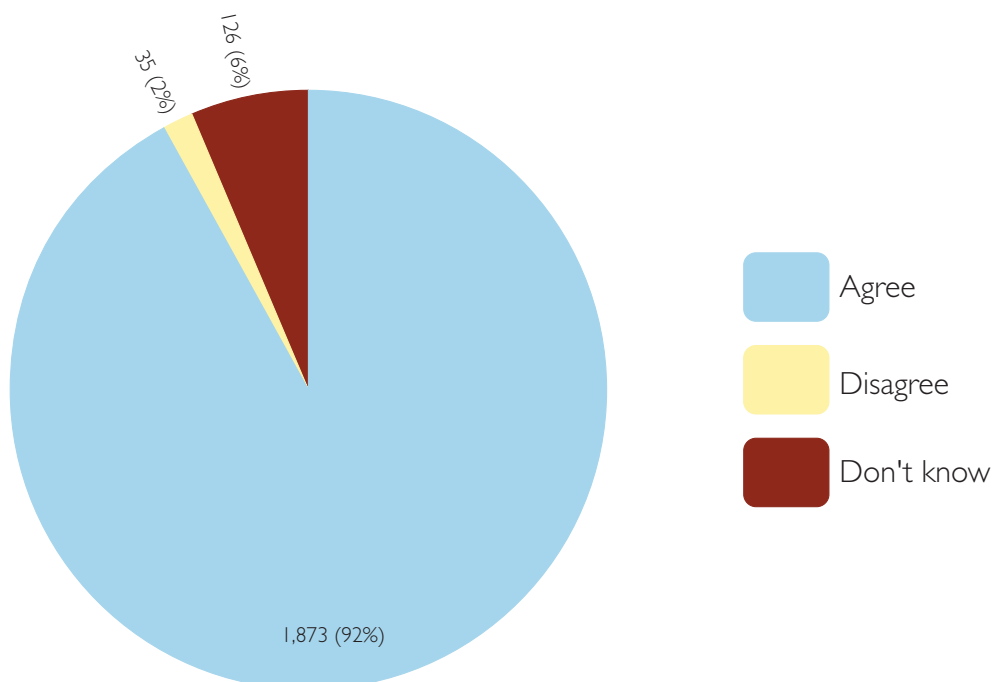
### Q4 How concerned, if at all, would you be if your surgeon did not hold a medical degree?



## Q5 Would you expect a surgeon working in the UK to be on a list of professionals who are recognised as specialists in surgery (as opposed to general practice specialists or other medical specialists)?



## Q6 Do you agree or disagree that the word 'surgeon' in a job title should be restricted by law? ie legally you could only be called a surgeon if you meet the education and training associated with the job?





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