

Message from the President, Dr. Mark Walsh

Good Afternoon,

With the descent of COVID upon all of us, the world has changed for many of us in both our personal and professional lives. We are more isolated than ever before, despite the ameliorating effects of electronic communication. The ZOOMification of our world has brought a new set of challenges in the performance of our professional duties, but has also created new opportunities in how we interact with our peers. The virtual CSF 2021 as well as the monthly webinars sponsored by CAGS and their associate societies, may well make the distribution of surgical knowledge and its implementation easier. We can now circumvent the particularly Canadian restriction of geography, as well the limitation of free time and the pressure that travel places on it.

While we watch how COVID has affected the delivery of health care and the issues it has raised with other medical specialties, I am struck by how the impact on general surgery is in many ways different. Trauma care, acute care surgery, cancer surgery and transplantation all continue for the most part. The difference is that we now see patients who have been lost or delayed in the referral system, resulting in more advanced cancer; who have waited longer than usual to report to the emergency room, with a concomitant increase in the complexity of their problems; the cancellation of surgeries due to lack of beds, to a lack of ICU spots, to self-isolation or illness in surgeons and nurses. Most of what we do has not changed, only the pressure to get it done.

This next year will present a number of challenges to general surgery and its practitioners. The need for our services will only increase. I know we will all continue to provide the care we are trained to give, despite the barriers that exist. It is doing this that defines what we do as general surgeons as well as who we are.

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**Dr. Mark J Walsh, MS, MD, FRCSC, FACS,
President, Canadian Association of General Surgeons**

A native of Montreal, Dr. Walsh obtained his BSc in Chemistry at Concordia University and his MSc Biochemistry after studying biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of Toronto, McGill and Concordia. During an NIH Post Graduate Fellowship at the Harvard Medical School, he supervised general surgery fellows which led to a change in career path. He obtained his medical degree from the University of Toronto, completing his general surgical residency at Dalhousie University and an HPB-Solid Organ Transplant Fellowship at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Walsh is currently an Assistant Professor of Surgery at Dalhousie and is the Surgical Director of the Atlantic Canada Multi Organ Transplant Program (MOTP) and the NSQIP lead for the Central Zone, NSHA. He clinical interests are in benign and oncologic HPB surgery, abdominal transplantation and access surgery.

His non-clinical role is centered almost entirely around surgical training. He was the Program Director for General Surgery at Dalhousie, the Chair of Post-Graduate Education Committee for CAGS and the RCPSC. He was Co-Chair of the CAGS Task Force on Endoscopy and Co-Chair of the RCPSC committee developing an Area of Focused Competency in Solid Organ Transplantation. In addition to taking on the role of President with CAGS, he sits on the CBS Liver Transplant Advisory Committee (LTAC), the surgical committee of the Kidney Transplant Advisory Committee (KTAC) and the Canadian Liver Transplant Network (CLTN).

His only interests outside of surgery are his children, Robert, Lucy and Erika; a nephrologist in New Brunswick; and his cats Siegfried and Tristan.