

Building Patient and Public Involvement into the Future of NELA

As the NELA Nurse/AHP Lead – and as someone who also leads on Patient & Public Involvement (PPI) and NoLap for the audit – I want to take a moment to reflect on why PPI is not just an optional extra, but a cornerstone for shaping the future of our audit.

Emergency laparotomy is one of the highest-risk procedures we see across surgical practice, yet the patient voice is often underrepresented in how we talk about outcomes, priorities, and improvement. By building a strong, diverse, and engaged PPI group, we can ensure that our work resonates with the people who matter most: our patients and their families. This extends not only to those who undergo surgery, but also to those who may opt against it – the NoLap group.

Right now, one of our most pressing tasks is developing the patient-facing pages of the NELA website. These pages must speak directly to patients and carers—providing clear, accessible information about what to expect, what questions to ask, and how to navigate care at such a critical moment. This can only be done properly with lived experience at the centre of the design.

This is where I'd like to ask for your help. Could you identify potential PPI members from your own clinical areas—patients who have undergone emergency laparotomy, carers, or family members—who might want to share their insights and shape the future direction of NELA? Their voices will be vital in making sure the audit reflects real-world experiences and continues to drive meaningful change.

As a multiprofessional community of clinicians you already do so much to improve care, and the work of THIS and in particular the Emergency Laparotomy Learning System Community is a great platform to inspire change. Bringing patients into this process more directly can only make our work stronger, clearer, and more impactful.

If you'd like to get involved in helping NELA expand our PPI group, or have suggestions for patients or carers who wish to contribute, please do get in touch via NELA@rcoa.ac.uk

Together, we can make sure the audit not only delivers data but also delivers for patients.

Angeline

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