Statement relating to recent media coverage of Paediatric surgical outcome data for the attention of those involved with the “Safe and sustainable” surgical services review.

The British congenital cardiac association (BCCA), the Society for cardiothoracic surgery (SCTS) and the central Cardiac audit database (CCAD) wish to firmly and openly state our position with regard to the interpretation of the paediatric cardiac surgical outcome data referred to in the Sunday Telegraph newspaper article published on the 19th September 2010.

This article related to data going back ten years. It cannot represent current or even recent outcomes and is misleading. Analyses of the most recent 3 years’ UK validated data, performed both by CCAD and independently by Professor Spiegelhalter, has shown no UK centre to lie outside accepted safety indicators.

There will be differences between historical and contemporary outcome data for numerous reasons. It would be a great surprise if there were not occasional outliers over years of data collection, particularly in the absence of any validated risk adjustment in this complex specialty. In rare cases where potential outliers have been identified in the past appropriate governance measures have been instituted by CCAD, the BCCA, the SCTS, the Royal college of surgeons (RCS) and local NHS Trusts.

To use historical data as a guide to current performance does the speciality, national clinical audit, patients and parents a great disservice, particularly when much more contemporary comparative outcome data is openly available to the public on the CCAD website. We would strongly urge the current review process from over-reacting to sensationalist journalism.

BCCA council
SCTS executive
CCAD project board
23.09.2010