

# Did you know?

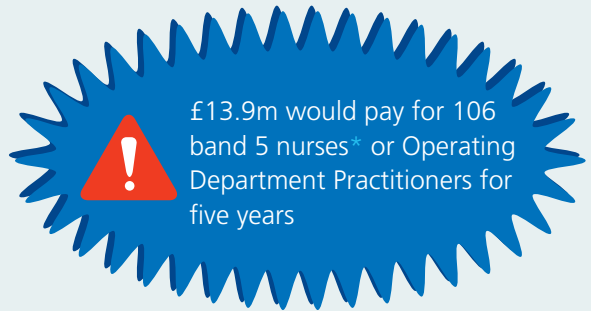
## Preventing surgical burns



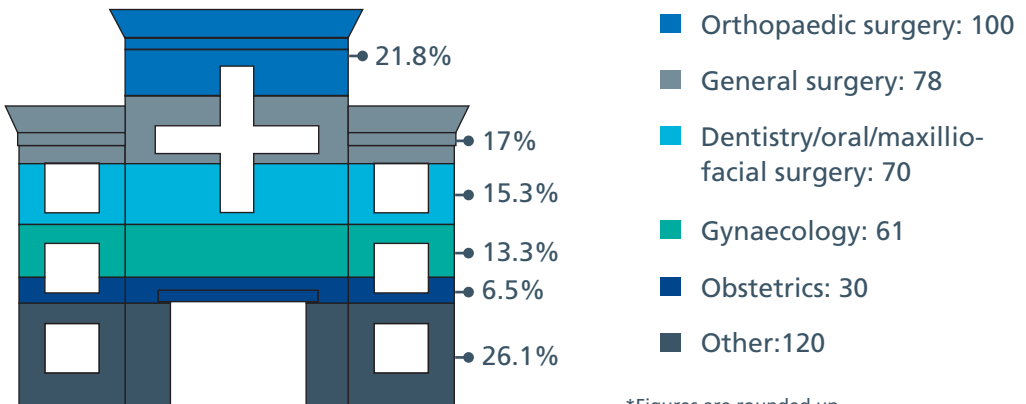
## Did you know?

From 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2019, NHS Resolution were notified of 631 clinical negligence claims relating to surgical burns to patients. Out of these 631 claims, **459** were settled, 58 were unmeritorious and 114 are still open. This has led to NHS Resolution paying **£13.9m** in damages and legal costs on behalf of NHS organisations.

Claimant costs: £7,165,021
Damages paid: £5,780,675
Defence costs: £968,931
<b>Total: £13,914,627</b>



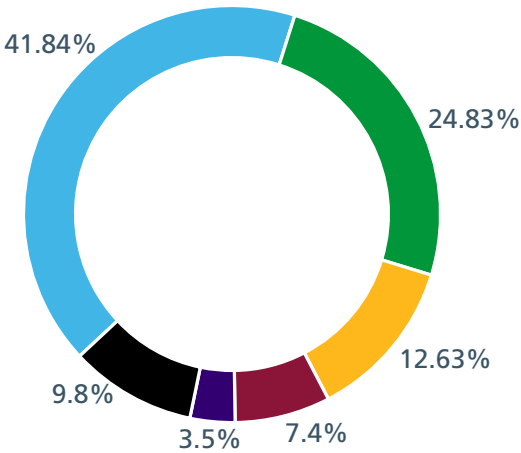
## Top five specialities of all settled claims



\*Figures are rounded up

\* Salary based on mid-range Band 5 of Agenda for Change pay scale as of 2019/20.

## Top five causes related to all settled claims



- Diathermy: 192
- Equipment/equipment malfunction: 114
- Reaction to chemicals/preparation solution: 58
- Operator error: 34
- Chemical caught fire: 16
- Other: 45

\*Figures are rounded up

## Examples of surgical burns claims

Clinician used an alcohol based solution before closing the wound. The solution caught fire which resulted in burns to the patient.

**Damages paid: £125,000**

Drill overheated during extraction of lower wisdom tooth under anaesthetic which caused burns to lip.

**Damages paid: £3,500**

Diathermy burns during laparoscopic cholecystectomy (keyhole removal of the gall bladder) led to bile duct damage.

**Damages paid: £46,000**

Burn to leg caused by overly-hot saline bag used for positioning during surgery.

**Damages paid: £82,000**

Many surgical burns incidents can be prevented by:

- Using robust risk management processes
- Adopting safer practices in relation to the observation and monitoring of patients
- Greater maintenance and correct use of equipment; and
- Safe storage and vigilance when using flammable chemicals, such as skin cleansing agents.

## What can you do?

- Promote reporting of incidents, near misses and ensure that learning from incidents is shared with other departments, teams and organisations
- Familiarise yourself with local and national policies for safe working practices in operating departments including Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) standards.
- Undertake regular safety audits of electrical equipment and use of flammable substances
- Ensure your department has an active member of the Association of Peri-operative Practitioners and access their peri-operative practice guide  
<https://afpp.org.uk/books-journal/afpppublications>

For further information please contact: [safety@resolution.nhs.uk](mailto:safety@resolution.nhs.uk)