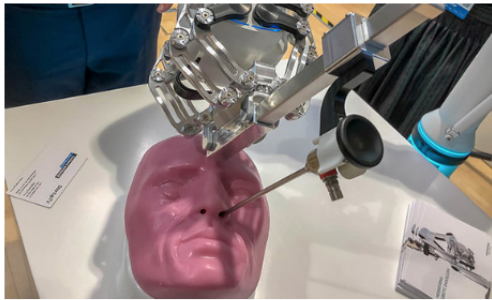


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11 Sep 19, 00:01

By Sophie Inge

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## Robotic surgery researchers 'need US partners' after Brexit

The UK's research and innovation in the field of robotic surgery is likely to suffer if the country crashes out of the European Union without a deal, a study has suggested.

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The study, published in the British Medical Journal Open on 11 September, claims to be the first mapping the impacts of Brexit on surgery research using network analysis and simulation modelling. The team behind it mapped global collaborations in robotic surgery research and used mathematical modelling based on academic papers published between 1988 and 2017.

It ranks the UK as third in the world for innovation in this field, behind the United States and Italy.

However, it says that the UK owes much of this success to the EU, which is the country's largest collaboration partner. The study argues that the best outcome for the UK and the EU would be for their research partnership to continue.

If those links are severed as a result of Brexit, the study's simulations suggest that the UK's best option would be to replace the EU with partners in the US.

However, it predicts that the UK's research impact would "ultimately suffer unless its new US partners were top-performing ones in the field".

"There is a consensus within the scientific and healthcare communities that Brexit is likely to undermine the UK's status as a global leader in science and innovation," said George Garas, lead author of the study and an honorary clinical research fellow at Imperial College London.

"We need to understand what the impact of losing the existing valuable EU links would be so as to tactically plan the UK's research and innovation strategy after Brexit."

While replacing EU partners with top US collaborators might maintain or even improve the UK's position as the third in the world in robotic surgery, it could be "difficult and costly" in the short term, he warned.

Moreover, he added, UK institutions may be less attractive to top US institutions if they are no longer well connected to the EU.

The study found that working with US partners would be more advantageous than leveraging collaborations with Asian countries such as China, India and South Korea, and that replacing UK-EU collaborations by working with countries outside the US and Asia would result in a substantial drop in the UK's performance.

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