

## Research and Training during the Pandemic

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Dear Editor,

We read with great interest the article published recently by Mutambirwa (1), titled “Interest in Continuing Surgical Activity—A Necessity During the Pandemic,” where the authors highlighted the importance of generating a change in attitude and innovating in the context of surgical activity and training during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the objective of guaranteeing adequate medical training for the next generations of healthcare workers. We thank Mutambirwa (1) for discussing such an important topic today. However, we would like to add a few comments. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted various aspects of daily life, leading to a large number of changes necessary to achieve adequate adaptation and survival. One of the fields with the greatest impact globally has been medical education and surgical training, which, as Lozada-Martínez et al. (2) point out, have undergone radical changes in the context of the training process of students, with strategies such as virtual education and the use of virtual simulators being implemented in order to reduce the likelihood of contagion and ensure the safety of patients, students, and

other participants (2). However, Kim et al. (3) emphasize that such virtual measures proposed as alternatives for training represent limited learning experiences; hence, different medical schools must adopt decisions that, while still being safe for students in the context of COVID-19 infection, allow them to obtain a satisfactory clinical experience (3).

Alterations in surgical practice have led to a decrease in the continuity of research projects, which significantly affects the production of new knowledge in surgery (1). In response to this problem, Miguél-Lapeira et al. (4) have proposed, as an alternative, the participation in surgical interest groups by medical students, residents, and teachers, so that they can continue to obtain and promote academic and scientific knowledge (4). Likewise, Vakayil et al. (5) emphasize that these interest groups allow students to increase their interest in the area studied by providing them with a real vision of the clinical and academic attributes of the group’s base discipline. In their study, where they inquired about the impact of interest groups specifically in surgery, it was found that the knowledge and confidence of the

participating students with respect to the different basic surgical skills increased significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) (5).

We propose the design and implementation of this educational strategy in the surgical departments of different medical schools and hospitals worldwide, especially in low- and middle-income countries, which would substantially increase the production of new knowledge, strengthen networks of new knowledge and contacts at national and international levels, and reinforce the academic training of medical student and residents in order to become excellent future surgeons who stand out in scientifically as well as in providing care.

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