

Education and Training Prize

21 Suture School: A Socially Distanced Surgical Education

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Introduction: Limited theatre exposure, cancelled practical teaching and placements abandoned due to COVID-19, has potential to damage the learning opportunities and experiences of medical students within surgery. We aimed to create and deliver an emergency small group teaching programme throughout the pandemic, targeted at increasing medical student confidence in basic surgical skills and inspiring interest in surgery.

Method: Multiple small-group teaching sessions were delivered to a cohort of 14 medical students recruited for work during the pandemic, whilst adhering to social distancing and sanitary measures. On completion of the programme and informal assessment of 11 surgical competencies, participants completed a follow up questionnaire to assess their improvement.

Results: 70% reported improvement in 10 competencies and 30% across all 11 competencies. The greatest improvements were in abscess drainage and knot tying. 30% relayed increased interest in pursuing a surgical career. 80% were 'more likely' to attend theatres in future.

Conclusions: The teaching series facilitated increase in self-perceived confidence of students in basic surgical skills, whilst inspiring surgical interests. During challenging times, we must support learners to undertake activity that drives improvement in training for the wider benefit of health services. Innovative teaching programmes may reduce the impact of similar adversity in the future.