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Letter to the Editor

Letter Regarding: Effect of Smartphone Laparoscopy Simulator on Laparoscopic Performance in Medical Students[☆]



We read with great interest the article by Awal *et al.* which investigates the effects of using a laparoscopy simulator, SimuSurg, to enhance basic laparoscopy skills in medical trainees and students.¹ With many more medical graduates applying to competitive surgical programmes, we agree with the authors on the importance of supporting medical students in developing their skills and capabilities whilst in training.²

Awal *et al.* found a significant overall improvement in laparoscopic skill-related scores for medical trainees that used the smartphone application Simusurg, compared to those who did not.¹ From our experience as medical students, we and our peers have greatly benefitted from practical skills sessions in our learning. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic we have experienced a reduction in both ward-based teaching and in-vivo practical sessions. Our fear is that as the COVID-19 pandemic places an increased burden on healthcare services, less of this in-vivo teaching will be able to take place, as is being reported in the literature.^{3, 4} It is clearly becoming increasingly important for medical schools to remain up to date and adapt with the global climate. We believe that the incorporation of new technologies such as laparoscopy simulation has the potential to enable high-quality learning and teaching to occur remotely and ultimately maintain the standard of surgical-skills teaching in a peri-pandemic era.

We see a particular advantage in using this laparoscopy simulation as an adjunct to dissection and anatomy teaching. This could increase confidence and competence in practical surgical skills as well as general anatomical knowledge. To explore the extent of this benefit to students' learning

and motivation, it would be interesting to assess medical student dexterity in performing dissection-related skills as well as whether the baseline interest in surgery that Awal *et al.* measured, improved with training with the laparoscopy simulator.

In summary we see laparoscopy simulation as a means of reducing pressures on hospital and teaching staff during the pandemic, whilst ensuring learning standards for the next generation of surgeons are sustained.

Disclosure

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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[☆] Disclaimer: The views expressed in the submitted article are those of the authors and not an official position of Cardiff University School of Medicine.

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