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The impact of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) crisis on surgical training: a global survey and a proposed framework for recovery

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Background: The SARS-Cov-2 pandemic had a profound impact on surgical services, potentially causing a detrimental impact on training opportunities. The aim of this global survey was to assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on surgical training and develop a framework for recovery.

Methods: A cross-sectional, web-based survey was conducted. This was designed by a steering committee of medical educationalists and validated by a group of trainees prior to dissemination.

Results: 608 responses were obtained from 34 countries and 15 specialties. The results demonstrated major disruptions in all aspects of training. The impact was highest for conferences (525/608) and hands-on courses (517/608), but less for in-patient care related training (268/608). European trainees were significantly more likely to experience direct training disruption than trainees in Asia (O.R 0.148, 95% C.I -2.443, -1.378) or Australia (O.R 0.097, -2.981, -1.678) ($\chi^2 = 87.162$ $p < 0.001$). Alternative training resources (webinars: 359/608, educational videos: 234/608) have emerged, although trainees expressed some dissatisfaction with them.

The collective responses generated a five-pillar framework for training recovery: that involved; prioritisation of trainee and public safety; guidance from training stakeholders with the involvement of trainees; prioritisation of training especially the roles of senior surgeons/trainers; provision of access to alternative/new teaching methods and measures to address trainee anxiety.

Conclusions: Training has been greatly affected. The introduction of new teaching methods and focus on training after the pandemic are imperative.