Abstract citation ID: bvac150.1067

Neuroendocrinology and Pituitary **ODP358**

The effect of multi-cultural inter-facility endocrine video case conferencing - A novel model of education during the COVID pandemic

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Introduction: Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic brought not only physical and mental health problems but also negative impacts on social, economic and educational activities. Trainees, including medical students, residents, and clinical fellows had fewer opportunities to see and discuss patients with supervisors in person. In contrast, recent advances in technology have made it possible to review cases with overseas experts through online conferences. We launched a biannual inter-facility endocrine case review meeting in a video conference format during the pandemic of COVID-19. Here we present the format of our inter-facility online case conference and its impact on trainees. Methods: The conference was organized by clinical faculty members from Japan, USA and Canada. For each conference, each facility prepared one to two cases in English. Four to five cases were presented and discussed with participants and guest commentators. After completion of the 4th conference, an

anonymous multiple-choice online survey was administered to all attendees, and data was collected and analyzed by the committee members. Differences in responses before and after attendance were analyzed by paired t-test. Results: Four conferences were held between July/31/ 2020, and Dec/10/2021 (CST). The facilities participating was as follows: University of Minnesota, Hokkaido Univ., University of Alberta, and Kobe Univ. Participants included medical students, residents, endocrine fellows, and faculty. Presenters were medical students (n=1), endocrine fellows (n=15), and neurosurgery faculty (n=1). Presented topics included the following: 11 cases with pituitary disorders, 3 cases with neuroendocrine tumors, 2 cases with adrenal disorders and 1 case of thyroid disorder. Sixty-two percent of the attendees stated that 3-4 facilities are an ideal size of the collaborations in inter-facility case conference, and 82% of the attendees felt twice a year is an appropriate frequency of the conference. Ninety-seven percent of the participants indicated their willingness to continue to attend. The survey results also revealed that the conference has a positive impact on trainees' clinical practice and career development. Furthermore, the confidence in presenting skills in English significantly increased after the conference (p<0.01). Conclusion: Under the COVID-19 pandemic, we launched a new format of inter-institutional case review meeting using a video conferencing system that transcends national boundaries. This represents a new educational method for trainees. A small-scale (3-4 facilities) international collaboration in a video format may provide opportunities for learning rare endocrine cases, cultural diversity of endocrine care, enhanced active learning for trainees, and the opportunity for international presentation. This may lead to the development of a novel educational system in the future.

Presentation: No date and time listed