



Reply to letter to the editor

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To the editor,

We are grateful for the knowledgeable comments regarding our study entitled “The impact of COVID-19 on surgical training at a tertiary hospital in Greece: a ‘hidden infectious enemy’ for junior surgeons?” [1]. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected many aspects of our lives, including scientific activities such as surgical training, posing a major burden for healthcare systems worldwide [2–4]. In our study, we highlighted the alarming fact that SARS-COV-2 infection has affected surgical trainees in their academic and professional development, causing a significant disruption in all forms of their training. Therefore, it is essential for surgical educators to implement novel means in order to maintain the integrity of surgical training, thereby protecting trainees, while at the same time ensuring the sustainability of health system workforces.

We strongly agree with the authors that beyond surgical trainees, who today, during the pandemic, are at risk of being undertrained in terms of surgical exposure and teaching, serious efforts should be made with medical students in order to familiarize them with the art of surgery. Our aspirations are our possibilities, and in this respect surgical interest groups for medical students may be an effective option for creating the

future generations of surgeons, overcoming the distancing from attendance due to the pandemic. Such groups may provide unique opportunities for undergraduate premedical students to gain exposure to the field of surgery, and preliminary results from departments of surgery show that this effort has garnered immense enthusiasm and robust participation by undergraduates and faculty alike [5].

Along with all the difficulties it brought, the COVID-19 pandemic reminded us that collaboration through science is one of the greatest tools of humanity to deal with threats. In these unprecedented times, it is imperative not only for mentors but also for mentoring programs to accompany medical students throughout their careers, in order to add further value to current evidence-based surgery, which is an integral part of medical science.

Conflict of interest M. Vailas, M. Sotiropoulou, F. Mulita and I. Maroulis declare that they have no competing interests.

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