

Medical Students Perceptions of Global Surgery and Global Health – Our Institution’s Experience

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Abstract

Background:

Significant interest has led to the establishment of global health/surgery programs to support advanced clinical care and education in resource-limited settings. Our institution lacks a global health/surgery curriculum for medical students. The objective of this study is to gauge medical student interest in global surgery/surgery curriculum and understand barriers to pursuing a global surgery/health rotation abroad.

Methods:

All medical students at our institution (495) were invited to complete an online anonymous questionnaire. Study approval was obtained from our Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was signed by participants prior to completing the questionnaire.

Results:

Medical students (163) completed the survey (32.9%). Prior international experience increases the likelihood of student involvement in global surgery/health. Preclinical students felt strongly about the value of global surgery/health experience when compared to clinical students (90% vs 70%). Eighty percent of students were interested in a 4th year global surgery/health elective. Interest in a 4th year elective strongly correlated with interest in a career in global health (94%) and global surgery (100%). Identified barriers to pursuing global surgery/health abroad were financing (74%), scheduling (58%), family obligations (23%) and personal safety (19%).

Conclusions:

This study focused on assessing medical students’ interest in elective global surgery/health curriculum and experience abroad. Based on this study, medical students are interested in global surgery/health curriculum and rotation abroad if supported financially and the rotation is incorporated in their curriculum. The findings from this study will further strengthen the need to incorporate global surgery/health in medical school curricula.