Improving Medical Student Engagement with Plastic Surgery: The Benefit of a Structured Curriculum

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Introduction

• Medical students are underexposed to the discipline of plastic surgery resulting in a lack of understanding of the wide range of conditions treated
• Emphasis on integrating plastic surgery into general surgery curricula internationally
• Early clinical exposure and engagement is the biggest predictor of students selecting a career in plastic surgery
Methods

• Curriculum Defined
  – Wound Healing & Reconstruction
  – Skin Cancer
  – Upper Limb Surgery
  – Burns

• Virtual Learning Environment created
• Online lectures covering curriculum recorded and uploaded
• Weekly personalised timetables for rotation
• In-person tutorials covering core topics
• Entry & Exit MCQs
• Feedback at end of week rotation
• Small group feedback at end of academic year
Results

- A total of 101 students rotated through the unit during the year
- Entry MCQ completed by 100% (n=101) and Exit MCQ completed by 51.4% (n=52)
- Significant improvement in knowledge of core curriculum topics (p<0.001)
- Small group feedback (n=12)
  - Rated plastic surgery knowledge as significantly better (p=0.002) and more comfortable referring to plastic surgery (p=0.001).
  - More likely to consider a career in plastic surgery (p=0.046)
    - 1/12 considered before rotation
    - 5/12 considered after rotation
Conclusion

• Implementation of a structured curriculum within plastic surgery rotations results in
  – Improved knowledge of key topics in plastic surgery
  – Increased sense of capability and comfort in referring to Plastic Surgery in future
  – Increased likelihood to consider career in plastic surgery after graduation

References