



Policy Document

Youth Participation in Global Surgery

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Introduction

The International Student Surgical Network (InciSioN) affirms that participation of healthcare professionals, especially medical students, as well as residents, young doctors and other students in Global Surgery, in all decision-making processes are essential for their strength, sustainability, and commitment of the future of the operation rooms, as they will put into practice the decisions made today. Therefore, InciSioN strongly believes in the active and meaningful participation of medical students, residents and young doctors in shaping the future of Global Surgery.

InciSioN's position

The **International Student Surgical Network (InciSioN)** is committed to meaningful participation in the Global Surgery field, being involved in decision making processes. Action by various stakeholders must be taken to support youth and tackle the challenges that limit their active participation, such as policies and programs which invest in youth and promote their empowerment and meaningful participation.

Call for Action

Therefore, InciSioN calls for:

All major stakeholders related to Global Surgery to:

- Ensure comprehensive consultation and collaboration across sectors, including civil society organizations;



- Recognise the importance of meaningful youth participation in Global Surgery topics;
- Ensure voices of young people are heard at all levels of society, recognising that young people will be living in a world informed by decisions made today.

Governments to:

- Involve and engage youth in all decisions regarding health, namely surgery, obstetrics, anaesthesia and trauma care.
- Create youth consultations and allow youth representatives in governmental participations locally and internationally.
- Identify and address the challenges and barriers that youth face in society which limit their participation.

Medical faculties and teaching institutions to:

- Recognise the role of medical students and young doctors in shaping Global Surgery;
- Promote youth consultation and involvement in matters related to Global Surgery;
- Facilitate a leave of absence for students engaging in Global Surgery Consultations and Events.

International institutions and Non-governmental organisations to:

- Promote youth consultation and involvement in matters related to Global Surgery.
- Include youth (medical students, young doctors and other Global Surgery enthusiasts) in national and international events on Global Surgery.

Healthcare sector to:

- Recognise the role of medical students and young doctors in shaping Global Surgery;
- Promote youth consultation and involvement in matters related to Global Surgery;
- Facilitate a leave of absence for students and young doctors engaging in Global Surgery Consultations and Events.

InciSioN National Working Groups to:

- Advocate and develop campaigns which call for participation in decision making processes;
- Raise awareness on Global Surgery amongst their peers and the academic community, as well as the general population;
- Capacitate with the knowledge that enables active and meaningful participation;
- Collaborate with other students organisations.



Background

Awareness and Involvement in Global Surgery

Global Surgery remains a relatively new field for students and doctors worldwide. However with current advocacy campaigns, there's a huge amount of interest being shown by the youth to strive for timely access to safe surgical care. InciSioN is spearheading this movement at the forefront, creating awareness regarding the different issues we face. Our members come from different cultures and backgrounds, bringing great opportunities to come together and discuss surgical healthcare in different areas and working on solutions to create awareness in each region through our network of National Working Groups. Our NWGs represent us in each country and work locally in collaboration with other organisations in different projects e.g. Basic Surgical Skills Workshops etc. Global Surgery Day is celebrated everywhere on May, 25th, annually. Through such efforts, students are taking a keen interest and recognizing the disparity in healthcare between HICs and LMICs. Through our research projects, we aim to study this disparity more closely. Where once Surgery was termed as the “neglected stepchild of global health” by Dr. Paul Farmer, with the current advancements in policy and research, one can say that the youth are starting to realise the importance of access and availability to safe surgical care.

Yet, there is a lot more to be done and we, as the future surgeons, must be involved in decision-making processes that will determine how surgery advances globally.

Main Actors

There are many stakeholders dedicated to advocating for Global Surgery and strengthening surgical, obstetric, trauma and anaesthesia care.

G4 Alliance

The Global Alliance for Surgical, Obstetric, Trauma and Anaesthesia Care (The G4 Alliance) works to make surgical care a global political priority. They are currently collaborating with over 80 organizations all over the world. They've set a target of Safe Surgical and Anaesthesia Care for 80% of the World by 2030.



WHO Emergency and Essential Surgical Care

The WHO Programme for Emergency and Essential Surgical Care (EESC) is dedicated to providing life-saving care in areas with difficult access and a very high disease burden. Their areas of work include injuries, infectious diseases, cancer and other non-communicable diseases, pregnancy-related complications, disasters and emergencies, and congenital anomalies.

Lancet Commission on Global Surgery

The Lancet Commission on Global Surgery studies the state of surgery around the world, and develops strategies for improving access to timely and safe care. They bring expertise in surgery, anaesthesia, obstetrics, oncology, health care policy, financing, economics, and research.

Harvard Program in Global Surgery and Social Change

The Program in Global Surgery and Social Change (PGSSC) is a collaboration between the Harvard teaching hospitals, Department of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) and Partners In Health (PIH).

Many other stakeholders are relevant to our action, which will depend on our focus areas. Below you can find some of them:

- ISS/SIC - International Society of Surgery/Société Internationale de Chirurgie
- Lifebox Foundation
- World Federation of Societies for Anaesthesiologists (WFSA)
- UCSF Center for Global Surgical Studies
- King's College London
- Lund University
- Unite for Sight
- Operation Smile
- Women in Global Health
- Global Health Council
- Global Health Workforce Network
- Physicians for Peace



Main Challenges

Status of Global Surgery in the Global Health Community

Global Surgery has been branded “the stepchild of global health”, because Global Health has been focused primarily on individual diseases and its prevention [1]. As part of healthcare, it must also be addressed, since it more than 5 billion surgical-preventable lives could have been saved with access to safe and affordable surgery [2].

All of this makes even harder for medical students, residents and young doctors to have an active and meaningful participation. Yet, these are the ones who can have the biggest impact in the future of Global Surgery; as youth, we can show how important and relevant it is to work and develop Global Surgery, to integrate it as an essential component of global Health and indispensable to achieving Universal Health Coverage.

Perception of Students on Global Surgery

The lack of adequate and timely access to safe surgical care when needed for over five billion people in the world, particularly in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) has necessitated a need for global surgery to be heralded with more importance, both amongst medical students and healthcare professionals. However, although the World Health Assembly has acknowledged the critical importance of access to surgery for universal health care, perceptions of global surgery amongst current medical students continue to be contradicted by current evidence and literature [3].

As recently as 2016, according to an anonymous survey conducted amongst medical students at Johns Hopkins University, more than 70% of 480 candidates failed to identify that ‘trauma results in more deaths worldwide than obstetric complications or HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined’ [3]. In a similar vein, a significant proportion of students erroneously believed that practicing in a surgical field was least amenable to pursuing a global health career, citing barriers such as length of training, lack of medical resources in LMICs and lack of established career tracks for global surgery [3].

In spite of this, the growing interest in global health among medical students and surgical residents, in both the United States and other developed countries has proved to not just be a passing fad, but rather a genuine career choice [4]. However, particularly among medical students, many of those who hope to translate their interests in global surgery into active participation are unable to do so due to the limited number of current opportunities [4,5].



Additionally, within their own curricula, the absence of uniform guidelines regarding global health teaching contributes to a significant proportion of students citing their global health curriculum as 'inadequate' [5]. Within this context therefore, it is imperative to seek complementary opportunities for student exposure to global health and surgery, such as implementing faculty-support for international electives as well as facilitating student participation in global surgery conferences [5].

In conclusion, it is evident therefore that current medical students' understanding of the role of surgical care within global health may not reflect current evidence-based data and practices. More importantly, such perceptions may adversely affect their decision to pursue a global health career through a surgical field, which highlights the need for enhanced global surgery education. By stimulating global health involvement early on in medical education, such steps will help ensure that the current surge in interest translates into more students striving to become tomorrow's global health leaders. It is therefore imperative to address such misconception through a platform of education and research.

Strategies of Action

Advocacy

Release regular statements on Global Surgery priorities

Position in Global Surgery issues, by creating Policy Statements and articles which reflect our stand

Advocate for the implementation of a Global Surgery curriculum

Education

Raise awareness among peers and medical community, as well as the general population, to defend Surgery and Health for All.

Develop campaigns to tackle awareness raising, advocacy and capacity building.

Build capacity among peers, through online platforms and learning opportunities.

Work to raise awareness about and challenge common misconceptions within the field of global surgery

Research

Empower members to lead studies in various fields within global surgery

Build a reputation for scientific rigor and reliability



Engagement in Decision-Making Processes

Create and maintain collaborations with other organisations

Active and meaningful participation in external meetings and conferences, as well as advocacy forums.

Collaboration

Join forces with other students' organisations in activities and statements.

Work regularly with healthcare professionals to strengthen our work, building interprofessional and multidisciplinary collaboration.

New Opportunities

Create a network of mentors amongst global surgery leaders

Create opportunities for medical students in Global Surgery, such as conferences, internships or exchanges

References

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