

# Exciting opportunities to collaborate on global surgery – an update on GASOC (Global Anaesthesia, Surgery and Obstetric Collaboration) activities

Since the Lancet Commission [1] and the inclusion of 'Anaesthesia in resource-poor environments' as one of the special interest areas in the RCoA 2021 curriculum [2], the importance of engagement with global surgery has been increasingly recognised. As a trainee-led organisation, GASOC is focused on innovating, uniting and collaborating across specialties with our colleagues from Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC). This is an update from the last six months.

## GASOC Journal Club

This is run monthly with rotating themes between anaesthesia, surgery and obstetrics. The recorded version is available on our YouTube channel. The anaesthetic components are also accredited by the RCoA for CPD points. Last December, we extended our collaborative approach further by hosting a joint journal club with the Global Anaesthesia Development Partnership via their Ethiopian and Zambian branches, bringing a global audience to the event. It was hosted by the UK representatives, with Drs Fekadu Getahun and Sarah Musalale presenting from Ethiopia and Zambia respectively. The age-old question of crystalloids versus saline in critical illness was presented by Dr Getahun, while Dr Musalale presented an update on pre-operative fasting times from a study in Botswana. A lively and multinational discussion followed these two excellent presentations. A notable outcome of this journal club arrangement was the ability to compare approaches and solutions to frequently discussed issues from different environments. Following this successful event, GASOC will continue to promote such partnership development and global information sharing. The next anaesthetic journal club will be presented by our counterparts from Cameroon in July 2022 on the theme of paediatric anaesthesia in resource-poor settings, with the author of the paper in the audience. We look forward to seeing you there!

## Virtual Reality in Medicine and Surgery (VRiMS)

VRiMS is an open-source platform collating educational surgical training videos in immersive virtual reality. GASOC has teamed up with VRiMS to bring cross-specialty content from LMICs to complement the extensive library of educational content. These virtual reality videos were launched in late April with Brighton and Sussex Medical School. They can be viewed free-of-charge from any internet-enabled device on [www.vrims.tv](http://www.vrims.tv).

The procedures are demonstrated via cadaveric dissection, and the programmes are supplemented with lectures and live discussions with healthcare professionals from around the world. Some interesting anaesthesia content includes emergency front-of-neck access and video laryngoscopy. The virtual reality element allows learners to feel truly immersed in the video and enjoy 360° views of the operative field and theatre environment. This has been shown to improve engagement with learning, acquisition of procedural skills and understanding of non-technical skills. VRiMS has been awarded a prize by the Association of Surgeons in Training Surgical Research Society. Get your VR goggles and scan the QR codes!

## GASOC Annual Conference

In September 2021 we held GASOC's annual conference themed 'The story of global surgery: past, present, future'. Nearly 150 delegates from 31 countries attended the virtual conference. We delineated the background of global surgery as a speciality, outlined the current challenges in tackling the inequalities in surgical care worldwide, and showcased ongoing projects. We also imagined the future of global surgery, and discussed innovative approaches and techniques that are changing how we provide care and training globally. We are proud that this event reflected the multidisciplinary and international ethos of our organisation. It included 20 speakers who came from a variety of countries, specialties and backgrounds and were repeatedly described in feedback as 'excellent'. A British anaesthetist, now in the twilight years of his career, shared his stories of volunteering with Mercy Ships thereby enabling hundreds of people to receive life-changing surgery. Another example was a traumatologist from Sweden who presented 'How to train a trauma surgeon', while several specialists in innovative surgical care shared their vision on how such training may be provided using virtual reality and remote learning. Several trainees had the opportunity to share their research and out-of-programme experiences in the field of global surgery, and we learned about ways in which these careers can be made sustainable through medical capacity building and environmental awareness.

We were proud that one of the delegates described it as "an amazing weekend with inspiring and insightful speakers." We aim to build on these strengths in the build-up to this year's conference that will focus on 'sustainability'. Keep your eyes peeled for it in autumn 2022.

## Working Groups

It is also recognised that other areas require collaboration and empowerment. Within GASOC we have formed four multidisciplinary cross-continent working groups - Curriculum Inclusion and Development, Education and Training, Research and Innovation, and Advocacy and Engagement. These aim to gather enthusiasts in the field to share experiences and engage in sustainable and meaningful change within the themes. Some activities will feature engaging with different Royal Colleges and Health Education England in mapping global surgery in the mainstream postgraduate curriculum.

## The Future

Since GASOC's conception in 2015 after the Crisp Report, we have steadily increased our reach further afield and helped bridge the gap of representation in the post-graduate realm. We aim to continue to run journal clubs and annual conferences as regular events. We are privileged to be a co-opted member of the International Relations Committee of the Association of Anaesthetists. It is hoped that we can continue to represent trainee perspectives internationally, both fairly and equally. In the face of climate change showing how interconnected we are and increasing international geopolitical tensions, we envisage growing interest and exciting innovation in global surgery collaborations. Feel free to connect and network with us if you are passionate about global health and surgery!

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## References

1. Meara JG, Leather AJM, Hagander L, et al. Global surgery 2030: evidence and solutions for achieving health, welfare and economic development. *Lancet* 2015; **386**: 569-624.
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