

Casey E Norlin

L3

LSU Health Sciences Center, New Orleans, LA

Mentor's Name: Alison Smith, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery, LSU

“A Survey of General Surgery Residents in the United States on Global Health Interest, Experiences, and Barriers to International Medical Work”

Purpose

Interest in global health experiences amongst medical trainees has not been well-elucidated. No previous study has attempted to capture the number of surgical trainees engaging in these experiences, nor have residents been surveyed regarding barriers to these international experiences. The objectives of this study are to determine the number of residents who have participated in global surgery and to further understand the obstacles residents face when attempting to engage in such experiences.

Methods

A 24-question anonymous electronic survey was created in REDCap and distributed to General Surgery Program Directors and administrative staff as identified via the Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database (FREIDA). Program Directors and staff were asked to distribute the survey to their residents, three times over five weeks (03/22/2021-04/26/2021). Responses were then collected and analyzed.

Results

Survey response rate was 1%. Of the 121 survey respondents, 45% (n=55) reported a previous global health experience. Only a small percentage participated in global health work during residency through their program (n=3). The majority of respondents who have previous global health experience completed these experiences prior to General Surgery residency. The limitations cited most often by residents as preventing them from engaging in global health were lack of time (n=70), insufficient awareness of opportunities (n=51), insufficient administrative or organizational support (n=48), insufficient funding (n=40), and insufficient mentorship (n=34). Note that a given resident may have selected multiple limitations.

Conclusions

Even as interest in global surgery and international experience grows amongst surgical trainees, current residents do not appear to be participating in such experiences during residency or through their residency programs. A lack of language and cultural training, as well as mental health support are barriers to these experiences. Institutions who work to address these gaps and the other challenges residents face in exploring these opportunities may be better equipped to meet the growing interest in global health. Future studies are needed to address this deficit.