The Changing Roles and Responsibilities of Program Directors During the COVID Crisis

Ara Vaporciyan, MD, FACS, MHPE
Both Learning and Assessing Skills are Threatened

- Pre-COVID-19 Threats
  - Increasing case complexity
  - Increased focus on outcomes
  - Rapid expansion of technology
  - Increased competition for time
  - Changing emphasis on which skills are acquired during General Surgery
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• Post-COVID-19 Threats
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  • Loss of exposure to cases
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Opportunities to learn/practice
Opportunities to assess technical skill
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Opportunities to learn/practice Opportunities to assess technical skill

Specifically, loss of cases that provided opportunities for Autonomy!
What Can be Done Now to Address this Gap in Training and Assessment?

• Retrospective measures
• Prospective measures
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• Retrospective measures
  • Review existing data on each trainee
  • Additional CCC meetings to review
  • Identify trainees’ Areas at Risk
  • Communicate those Areas at Risk to
    • the relevant teaching faculty
    • the respective trainees
  • Develop a plan to address those Areas at Risk

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• Prospective measures
  • Communicate with teaching faculty regularly on trainees’ progress
  • Assume control of case assignments
  • Provide autonomy at the case component level
  • If an Area at Risk is not being addressed
    • Reconvene CCC to get consensus
    • Early discussion with the trainee
    • Consider extending training
Extending Training

• For the trainee
  • Discuss with Thoracic RC Executive Director (Chris Fox)
  • Temporary complement increase
  • Duration determined by the PD based on trainees’ needs

• For the subsequent set of trainees
  • Alter rotation structure
    • More time on rotations where cases minimums were challenging
  • Explore away rotations
  • Limit or hold non-accredited fellowships
  • Continue heightened evaluation of all trainees
    • More frequent CCC evaluations
    • More frequent communication with the teaching faculty
Opportunities

“A crisis is a terrible thing to waste.”
Paul Romer
Stanford Economist
Opportunities

- Better assessment tools of technical skills
  - We rely heavily on direct observation

**Simple Skills**
- Continue direct observation
- Consider augmentation with...
  - Simulation
  - Component participation
  - Structured evaluations
  - Scheduled evaluation

**Complex Skills**
- Limited opportunities for direct observation
- Augmentation with...
  - Structured evaluation
  - Videotaped debrief and evaluation
  - Frequent dialogue with teaching faculty

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  • Incorporating trainees into virtual visits
  • Virtual journal clubs, teaching sessions, case reviews etc...

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• Leveraging virtual connectivity to increase evaluation
  • Virtual CCC meetings
  • Virtual APR, perhaps bi-APR

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Questions/Answers