

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ITALIAN PLASTIC SURGERY INTEREST GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

As training programs differ largely across Europe ¹, the teaching of plastic surgery procedures could be implemented already at the university level. For these reasons, we feel the need to create an association (an interest group indeed) to develop and strengthen the theoretical and practical knowledges of medical students interested in plastic, reconstructive, and aesthetic surgery ².

PERCEPTIONS ON PLASTIC SURGERY

Misconceptions surrounding the discipline of plastic surgery are common among not only the public, but medical students and professionals as well: many of the new graduates feel not adequately prepared and confident about procedures of plastic surgery specialty ³.

This implicates two main outcomes: 1) students cannot really understand a priori whether a career in plastic surgery is appropriate for them; and 2) for those who still decide to pursue a career in plastic surgery, there is a lack of general preparation to cope with such a complex residency.

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The establishment of interest groups promotes a stronger collaboration of students with residents and faculty and allows for further educational trainings in an extra-curricular setting ²⁻⁴. Although these kinds of organizations are widespread in other countries, there exists no analogous experience in Italy.

ITALIAN ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

Italian med schools are organized such that lectures of plastic, reconstructive, and aesthetic surgery consist generally of only a module of 6-12 hours

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during the last years with no mandatory clerkships (the main practical experience in such departments is usually on a voluntary basis) ⁵.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES

Plastic surgery interest groups are very common in the USA. These provide a dedicated online page and a variety of hands-on clinical activities and educational experiences. Through a multitude of academic opportunities and extensive interactions with head plastic surgery faculty, all these organizations are intended to help students, who wish to pursue a career in plastic surgery ⁴. No such section can be currently found in the Società Italiana di Chirurgia Plastica Ricostruttiva ed Estetica (SICPRE; [en] Italian Society of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery; www.sicpre.it), of which only certified plastic surgeons and residents are allowed to become members and attend meetings and webinars for free.

OBJECTIVES OF THE INTEREST GROUP

The purposes of the association we intend to establish are to enhance the theoretical and practical fundamentals of plastic surgery amongst medical students and to make them ready to face a specialty training as best as possible. To accomplish these objectives, different strategies have been suggested by taking American interest groups as an example ^{2-4,6}, among which: the development of plastic surgery clubs in med schools modeled on US 'chapters', aimed at gaining access to institutional resources and developing relationships with plastic surgeons of the reference university/hospital; the availability of mentoring in the department; the preparation and collection of didactic material to be shared on online platforms; the improvement of scientific competitiveness through the funding of grants for research programs.

NATIONAL MEETING(S)

Networking continues to be a key element of the career of a medical doctor, and a national meeting would be the occasion to know other students and doctors with similar interests and to discuss about interest group aims and maneuvers.

A EUROPEAN INTEREST GROUP

We are also considering the possibility of establishing a European plastic surgery interest group. This association would allow the coordination of the different national groups and could also help improve students' experiences through international programs and exchanges.

CONCLUSIONS

The establishment of this organization would be the perfect tool to provide students with mentorship and educational support and equip them with skills and information needed to be competitive applicants for residency positions ^{1-4,6}.

For completion of the work, we are going to organize a national congress in the next few months, in which we will discuss about the formation of a European interest group.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

DC, AR: A.

DC, AR, SC: D, DT, S.

DC, AT, GC, MDR: O (drafting the article).

DC: W.

PI, LM, MB: O (critically revising the article).

DC, PI, BM, GS: O (study supervision).

DC: O (approved the final version of the manuscript on behalf of all authors, administrative/technical/material support).

Abbreviations

A: conceived and designed the analysis

D: collected the data

DT: contributed data or analysis tool

S: performed the analysis

W: wrote the paper

O: other contribution (specify contribution in more detail)

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Not applicable.

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