Correspondence

The optimistic pursuit of plastic surgery training

Dear Sir

We read with enthusiasm the article on plastic surgery training in the UK: results from a national survey of trainee experiences with a trepidatious optimism; as we are aspiring Plastic surgical trainees.

We found it intriguing that skin cancer was not in the top four desired subspecialties for trainees despite their increasing exposure to this disease in their everyday practice. With cases of Melanoma increasing at an alarming rate making it the fifth most common cancer within the UK, we welcome the author’s suggestion that the data within their publication be considered, when mentoring trainees about workforce demands. We share the author’s sentiments that Plastic surgery trainees should be encouraged to align their career ambitions with the demographic of their patient cohort, and so, in the UK with an increasing prevalence of skin cancer this could be justified.

We appreciate the author’s acknowledgement that many regions have not yet developed a strategy in response to the changes implemented within the NHS with respect to aesthetic surgery. Like the authors; we too feel this is something that should be prioritised for Plastic surgical trainees. These services have become increasingly more accessible due to the number of health practitioners providing aesthetic services growing within the UK. Inevitably, with more practice will come more complications which will undoubtedly result in increased referrals to the National Health Service (NHS) Plastic surgery services. Without adequate exposure or training in this field Plastic surgery trainees may find themselves underequipped to manage such patients. In a similar fashion, we feel the authors were very astute to recognise that a comparable problem may arise with respect to the outsourcing of elective procedures. This is something we fear may become more frequent rather than less; given the tight constraints on budgets and increasing patient work load, not to mention the impact COVID-19 has had; almost abolishing elective surgical cases. Again surely trainees will be disadvantaged without adequate exposure to these types of procedures and perhaps exploring this area further may be warranted.

We were pleased to find that of the responses from current trainees there was overall satisfaction with respect to how Plastic surgical training was being delivered within the UK. However we are very aware that these results pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic and so do not reflect the disruption to surgical service provision and training that has ensued. With many clinics ran virtually and elective operations cancelled; not to mention a looming second wave - we are apprehensive about the extent of the impact this will have on surgical training across all specialities. We would like to suggest that perhaps the authors could consider adapting their questionnaire to investigate how Plastic surgery

not previously presented.
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training in the UK has been facilitated during the COVID-19 pandemic. This could be utilised to try and assess the impact directly on the trainees and identify areas of their training that now need to be addressed; to try and mitigate any setbacks for our future generation of consultant Plastic surgeons.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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Ethical approval

n/a.

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