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## Letter to the Editor: 'Medical Education in Times of COVID-19: What's New in Neurosurgery?'



### LETTER:

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the traditional dynamics of education in all fields of knowledge around the world. Medical education is one of the most affected fields because much of the knowledge to be acquired is the product of the experience gained during clinical internships. A radical change has been postulated in the training process of undergraduate students, interns, and residents, which is based mainly on online classes, teleconsultation, and use of virtual simulators as the main measure to reduce the probability of contagion among students, family members, patients, and asymptomatic health care workers, while simultaneously avoiding the use of nonessential personal protective equipment as an effort to save resources.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, this new educational model, which has emerged as a strategy to avoid an educational progress delay, is rejected by a large part of the community in which it has been implemented.<sup>2</sup> Some of the presented arguments are the complexity of the interaction through virtual platforms, isolation between students, decreased attention of students because of the home environment, and insufficient ability to use platforms and to implement innovative tools; finally, the main disapproval arises in the clinical department, where students consider it necessary to have direct contact with the patient. In the case of teachers, the main problem arises in the saturation of creating and attending digital classes while having to meet the care burden simultaneously.<sup>2,3</sup>

Many authors have explained that the neurosurgical area is one of the most affected within the medical-surgical specialties because institutional modifications have caused a significant decrease in the follow-up of research projects, cessation of undergraduate student rotations, and a decrease in participation on surgical procedures by residents, which impacts negatively on the approach and production of new knowledge in neurosurgery.<sup>3-5</sup> There have been no new changes to date within the neurosurgical area compared with the other specialties; however, some of

the current recommendations given by different departments of neurosurgery are to persist in the process of continuous reassessment of proposed educational policies (especially for undergraduate students and residents) to take advantage of the availability to join research groups related to the area, to prepare virtual meetings that serve as tutorials for medical students, and to interact through events of social appropriation and circulation of new knowledge (symposiums, seminars, congresses, etc.).<sup>4,5</sup>

Just by taking a glimpse at the worldwide scenario, it is mandatory to land on the new reality ahead of us and to look favorably at the opportunity to strengthen these new didactic tools, which are not the same as practice-based learning or direct patient care, but are an alternative that allow us to go hand in hand with knowledge while in this situation.

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