

# Global Surgery Speaker Series: An Education and Advocacy Resource for the Advancement of Global Plastic Surgery

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## INTRODUCTION

Access to safe, timely, and affordable plastic and reconstructive surgical care is limited, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Lack of plastic surgery workforce, infrastructure, supplies, financing, and surveillance systems hinders efforts to address this burden.<sup>1</sup> Most LMICs have single-digit numbers of plastic surgeons delivering care for millions of people.<sup>1,2</sup> Plastic surgeons have attempted to address the need through short-term surgical programs with 180 plastic surgery nongovernmental organizations.<sup>3</sup> This has brought relief to millions of patients, but the burden is still increasing.

A health systems approach is needed. Global plastic surgery, defined “as the enterprise of providing improved and equitable [plastic surgery] care to the world’s population, with its core tenets as the issues of need, access and quality,”<sup>4</sup> offers solutions. It accomplishes this through service delivery, research, evidence-based policymaking, education, and advocacy. Education strengthens the plastic surgery workforce and inspires trainees to consider a plastic surgery career to help regions of great need.

Although direct application of high-income country solutions to LMICs often proves impractical, professionals knowledgeable of their specific social, cultural, and economic contexts can adapt or create contextually appropriate interventions. Likewise, professionals in high-income countries can learn and adapt LMIC solutions in their settings, resulting in cost-effective interventions that enhance patient care.<sup>5</sup>

Advocacy brings attention to the critical need for improved plastic surgery access in LMICs, generating public support and encouraging policymakers to prioritize surgical initiatives. Advocacy also increases partnerships and funding for training programs, equipment, and infrastructure development within LMICs.

Educational opportunities such as Operation Smile’s monthly *Global Surgery Speaker Series* (GSSS) offer a platform

for inclusion, knowledge exchange, advocacy, and professional development. The GSSS has addressed specific topics such as the creation and execution of National Surgical Obstetrical and Anesthesia Plans in LMICs, and task-sharing/task-shifting challenges. Also, broader themes of social media advocacy, data-driven service delivery, cleft care protocol development, and clinical ethics have been presented, creating an invaluable platform for plastic surgery trainees and residents. (See table, **Supplemental Digital Content 1**, which shows list of past GSSS webinars, <http://links.lww.com/PRSGO/D488>.)

The objectives of plastic surgery training outlined by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education include technical skill, ethical practice, and cultural competency. Webinars such as “Adapting Elements of Cleft Care Protocols for Diverse Populations” and “Upholding the Rights of Children in Health Care,” align with these objectives, providing insights into resource allocation challenges and ethical dilemmas faced in varied cultural contexts.

We invite surgery professionals to register and participate in the monthly GSSS. We welcome guest speakers from diverse backgrounds who can contribute to the richness of our discussions on current global plastic surgery topics. The keynote summary is published on the Operation Smile platform for further reference. Webinars are held through Zoom and posted on Operation Smile Academy.

The success of the next generation of plastic surgeons rests on rigorous training objectives and platforms fostering broader knowledge and collaboration among mentors, trainees, and residents today. The GSSS is a catalyst for growth, and part of our collective effort to shape a more equitable future through surgical care.

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Received for publication May 24, 2024; accepted July 24, 2024.

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*Plast Reconstr Surg Glob Open* 2024; 12:e6144; doi: [10.1097/GOX.0000000000006144](https://doi.org/10.1097/GOX.0000000000006144); Published online 10 September 2024.

Disclosure statements are at the end of this article, following the correspondence information.

Related Digital Media are available in the full-text version of the article on [www.PRSGlobalOpen.com](http://www.PRSGlobalOpen.com).

**DISCLOSURE**

All authors work with Operation Smile in the department of policy and advocacy, and GSSS are currently being hosted by the department.

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