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In Reply to the Letter to the Editor Regarding “Impact of COVID-19 on Neurosurgical Training in Southeast Asia”



We thank Goyal et al. for their commentary on our research article on the impact of COVID-19 on neurosurgery education in Southeast Asia.¹ Their letter underscores the important role of neurosurgery residents in the perioperative care of patients, as well as in the day-to-day academic and administrative activities of any neurosurgery department. They highlighted the vulnerability of our trainees during this pandemic, citing work conditions that are not uncommon, especially in low- and middle-income countries where trainees significantly augment the neurosurgical workforce to provide essential neurosurgical services.²

It must be emphasized that the primary objective of residents and fellows during their time in training is to acquire the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes demanded by the field of neurosurgery. In the middle of this long-drawn-out pandemic, trainees must not be viewed as mere foot soldiers, and neurosurgery program directors around the world must see to it that the residents' and fellows' training needs are continually met, and their personal and psychosocial needs addressed. They are not dispensable, and their universal rights as health workers must be protected.

We would also like to commend the authors for sharing the results of their own resident survey in India. Undoubtedly, there are more similarities than differences in the experiences of neurosurgeons and trainees worldwide. Despite the closure of international borders, the rapid, open-access publication of scientific articles on COVID-19, and the remarkable number of digital connections

forged through webinars and social media have allowed all of us to share innovations and learn from each other. This is testament to a neurosurgeon's commitment to excellence: to be able to provide the best possible care, even under challenging circumstances. We are hopeful that these international partnerships in neurosurgery will persist, long after we have emerged from this global health crisis.

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