

Surgical Skills Course as a Confidence Building Tool in Low Resource Settings

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Introduction & Aims

Concerns exist surrounding the development and distribution of surgical care in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC)(1-2). Somaliland, a de facto independent nation in the Horn of Africa, faces similar issues with an unequal geographical distribution of surgical services and minimal postgraduate training available to potential surgeons (3). Postgraduate training and courses are effective ways to increase service delivery and engagement, as well as surgical aspirations (4-5). We aimed to deliver a high-quality introductory surgical skills course in Somaliland to increase capacity through these mechanisms.

Methodology

A 1-day programme was delivered across five different institutions in four cities in Somaliland. There were 80 participants across the five institutions, 93% were between 20 and 30 years old, and 51% were female. Skills included: suturing, knot tying, incision and excision, vessel ligation, bowel anastomosis and basic laparoscopy. Participants completed pre- and post-course surveys to assess previous experience/exposure and to measure confidence in several skills to evaluate the effectiveness of the course.



Figure 1. Interns and resident doctors taking part in the surgical skills course - Burao Central University College, Somaliland

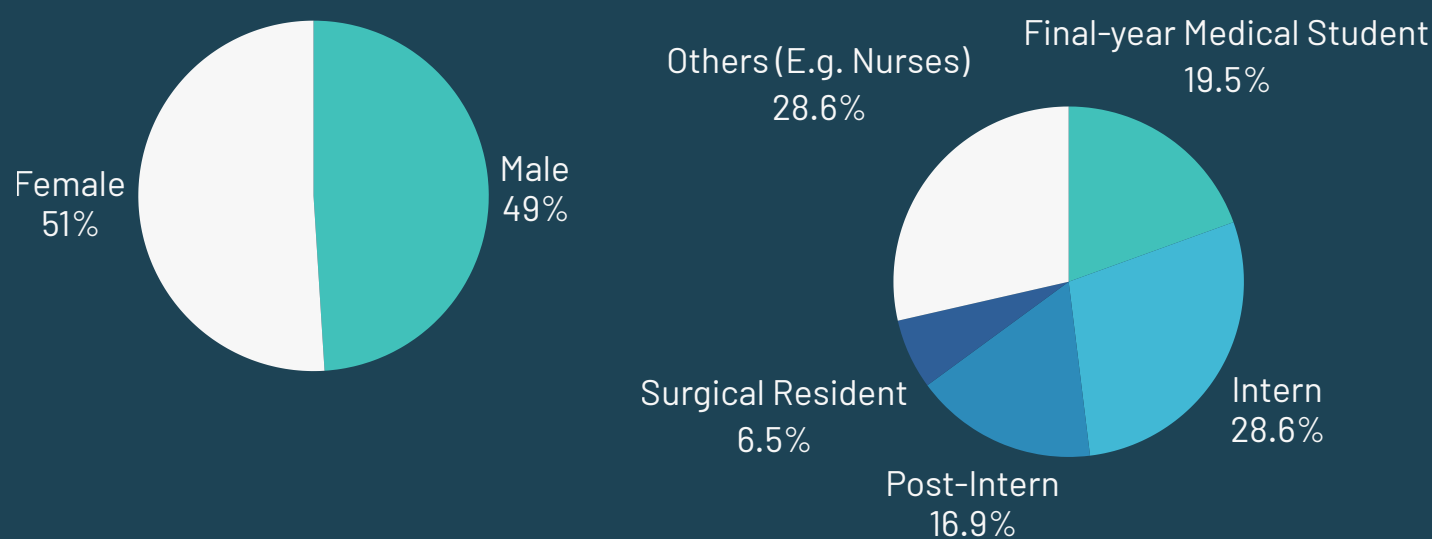


Figure 2. Demographics. n=80

Results

The percentage of participants who were confident (Giving a score of confident/very confident on a Likert scale) in each skill went up significantly (Handling Basic Instruments: 66% to 97%, basic suturing skills: 71% to 95%, knot-tying: 53% to 96% and excision of lesion: 41% to 76%).

There was a statistically significant increase in the average confidence scores before and after the course across all skills (p values <0.05). No statistically significant difference in confidence was found for gender or institution. 96% of participants rated the quality of the course as either good or excellent.

Results - Continued

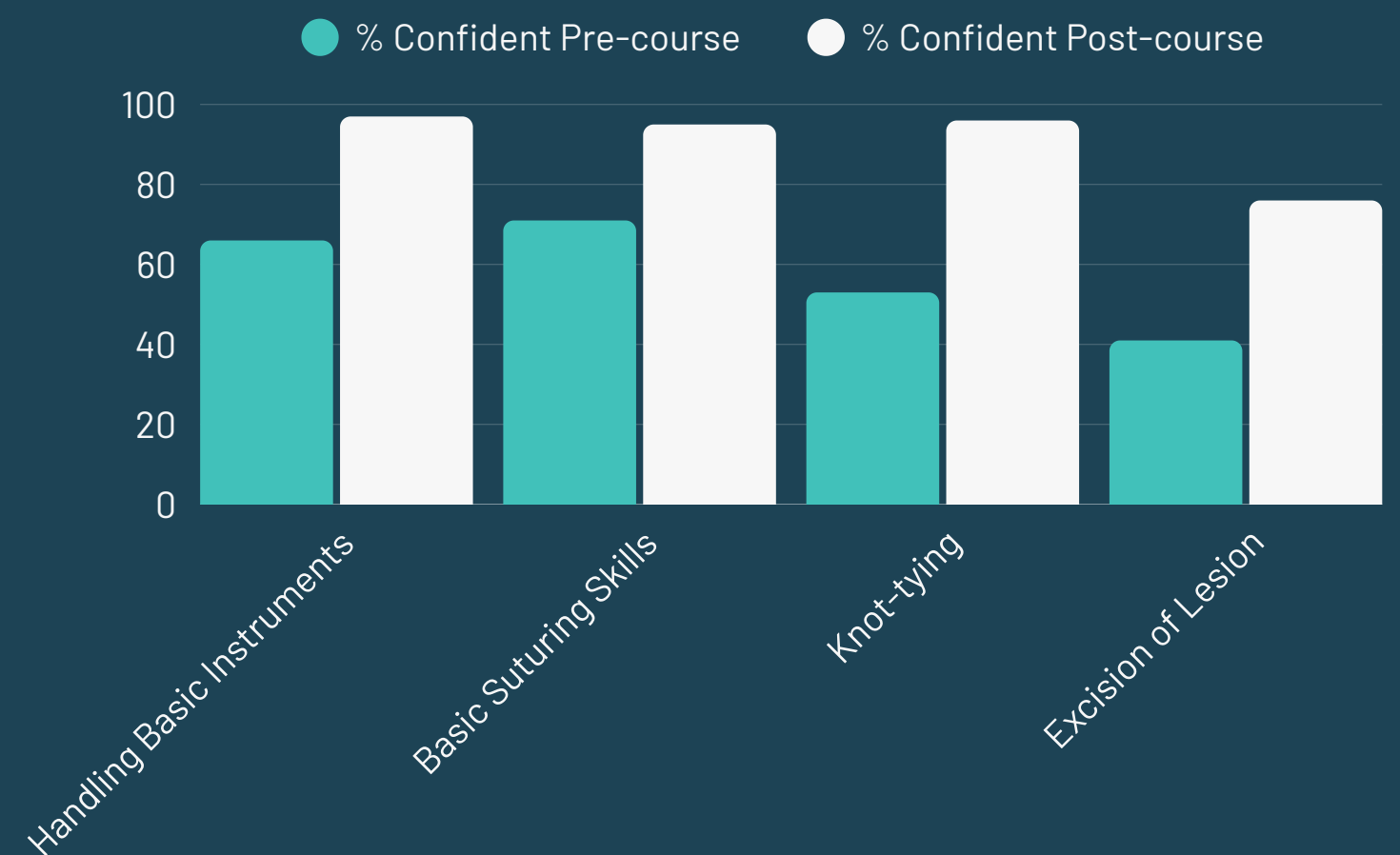


Figure 3. Confidence among participants

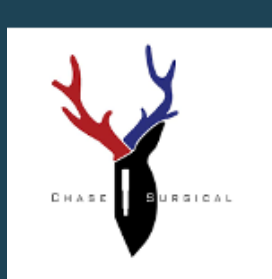
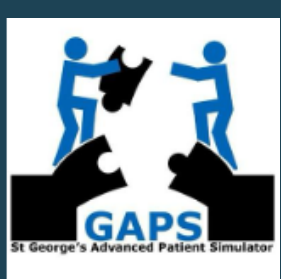
Conclusion

The course was well received. Our participants expressed the need/importance of continuing to practice their skills; as a result, we helped to set up surgical skills labs using the materials we brought with us. Future endeavours should ensure sustainability by keeping costs low and by employing a "train the trainer" model to increase the number of potential faculty.

References

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