

Survey of International and Global Surgery Involvement: 2017

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In 2017, Dr. Gwen Hollaar (director of the Center for Global Surgery) and Azalea Lehndorff (former medical student at University of Calgary) carried out a survey on global surgery involvement among faculty and residents within the departments of surgery, obstetrics and gynecology and anesthesia of the University of Calgary.

Out of 84 respondents, half had participated in a global surgery project at one point of their career and slightly more than one third of all of study participants were currently active in an ongoing project.

The majority of the respondents (90%) were below 60 years of age, mainly from the Departments of Surgery (33) and Anesthesia (29).

The types of activities that study respondents participated in included Clinical Care (80%), Education (48%), Humanitarian Aid (39%), Global Health Elective training (36%) and Research (9%).

Eighty-seven percent of study participants have moderate or significant interest in future involvement in global surgery activities. Sixty-five percent of study participants would be willing to work with a trainee from a partner institution. Only 26% of study participants have worked in rural or Northern Canada.

When asked why they are interested in global surgery activities the primary reasons included sense of altruism (78%), desire to increase cultural awareness/sensitivity (59%), and the desire to develop collaboration and international partnerships (58%). However, barriers to being involved in global surgery projects include scheduling difficulties (56%), no connection to international partnership (26%), lack of coverage for practice at home (21%), concern for personal health (19%), too specialized or feeling they have nothing to offer (17%), and lack of funding (17%). Seventeen percent responded that nothing prevents them from participating. On the other hand, things that would encourage greater participation in global surgery activities include well established partnerships allowing repeat visits (64%), access to funds that reimburse some travel costs (54%), administrative staff who can assist with logistics and travel arrangements (54%), participating primarily in clinical work (41%), easy access to information (Website, Dept. of Surgery, CSM) (35%), support to cover surgical practice at home (31%), and access to funds to support lost salary at home (30%).

In summary, more than 50% of respondents have or are working in global health, clinical and educational involvement is predominant, and participants have preference for short term involvement with option for repeat visits within an established program that has specific goals. The main obstacles to involvement include scheduling difficulties, no connection to an international partner and concern for personal safety.