

## Editorial

# **GIMBERNAT SURGICAL SOCIETY: A STUDENT-LED ASSOCIATION THAT PROMOTES SURGERY AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS**

## **SOCIEDAD QUIRÚRGICA GIMBERNAT: UNA ASOCIACIÓN DIRIGIDA POR ESTUDIANTES QUE PROMUEVE LA CIRUGÍA ENTRE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE MEDICINA**

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The Gimbernata Surgical Society ([www.aqgimbernata.com](http://www.aqgimbernata.com)) is a student-led association that promotes the interest in surgery among medical students. It is based in Hospital del Mar Campus, Barcelona, in the shared bachelor's degree of Medicine between Universitat Pompeu Fabra and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Our society was created 10 years ago, by a group of students attracted to surgical specialties under the mentorship of Professor Manuel Pera. Together, they founded a non-profit association with the objective of fostering interest in surgery among medical students, as well as developing other skills which are not usually taught in the medical degree such as medical humanities, clinical surgical anatomy, or surgical specialties orientation (1).

It is known that there is a large tradition of students' surgical societies in the anglo-saxon countries, particularly in the United Kingdom, where the Royal College of Surgeons supports the creation and promotion of these associations. Nevertheless, the Gimbernata is the only association of these characteristics in Spain. To enrich the interest in surgery, our society organizes different activities throughout the academic year for medical students. These activities are focused on each year degree of expertise and skills. For example, first

year students participate in asepsis and antisepsis workshops, where they are taught the importance of sterility in the operating theatre, and they are shown how to do the surgical hand washing. Another popular activity is the suturing workshop, where general surgery residents and consultants show how to tie basic knots or make a simple suture into artificial skin. Moreover, students can assist to minor surgeries right from the moment they begin their degree of medicine, which is an enthusiastic activity that brings the first-year members in touch with the hospital, whereas in other universities this is not accomplished until the fourth year.

When students acquire more expertise in the following years of training, they can assist to major surgeries or apply to surgical summer clerkships and Erasmus programs abroad. They can also collaborate in research projects as data collectors from clinical records, bringing the chance to help clinicians with databases as well as learning the process of clinical investigation.

In the recent years, the board team has been organizing an annual symposium (Scalpel) that brings together students from different Catalan universities to listen lectures and to try more complex workshops such as dermatological surgery, cardiac surgery, ophthalmological procedures, arthroscopy, laparoscopic simulators, trauma patient simulation, among others.

Finally, our members can attend to monthly conferences about different topics that include new surgical techniques, medical humanities, women in surgery, surgical anatomy, surgical specialties counseling or research opportunities. It has been seen that the interest for surgical specialties has declined in the recent years (2,3). Therefore, there is a need to create associations in Spanish universities that promote early contact between medical students and surgery, which has been found to have a significant impact in surgical interest at the end of the medical degree (4,5). A useful way to do this is by gathering support from the surgical institutions of each region.

Our society has always been opened to collaborate with other entities as well as providing advice or guidance on how to create a surgical society. We have recently been working with medical students from Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, to create the first surgical society in Eastern Africa. Also, we have established international connections with other surgical societies from London and Edinburgh, and we aim to keep expanding this student-surgical network.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Medicine is facing a path of high specialization and large need of training, specially in surgery. For this reason, it is highly relevant to start going further in oneself training right from the start of the medical career in fields like research, surgical training, medical humanities, or international relationships. All of these can be accomplished by participating in a surgical society. Therefore, it is deeply recommended to enroll into one surgical society or to create a new one in case your university does not have one. You can always be the first to bring a change into your Medical School! - from little seeds grow mighty trees.

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