

RESIDENT TRAINING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

We find ourselves in a precarious condition, amidst unprecedented times. Ever since the last edition of this journal, the number of cases in the country has been exponentially rising. Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of the entire situation and indeed one which is most worrisome, is the fact that, as a community, we are yet to reach a peak in the number of cases. As bleak as it may sound, the worst has not yet arrived.

Recent studies documenting the isolation of SARS-CoV-2 virus from the mastoid and middle ear as well as studies showing Otolaryngologists to be the medical specialists most vulnerable to contracting Coronavirus, have only added to the gloom engulfing our fraternity.

Otolaryngology Residents throughout the country are being adversely affected. Several residents belonging to the outgoing batches of their respective departments, have had their exams delayed endlessly. In rare cases where exams have been conducted, they have been done in a makeshift way, with the addition of several virtual components, depriving Residents of an opportunity to showcase the knowledge that they have acquired with such difficulty. Many Residents are being posted to COVID-designated hospitals, where the specialist knowledge and skills which they have laboriously cultivated over their tenure will not be put to appropriate use.

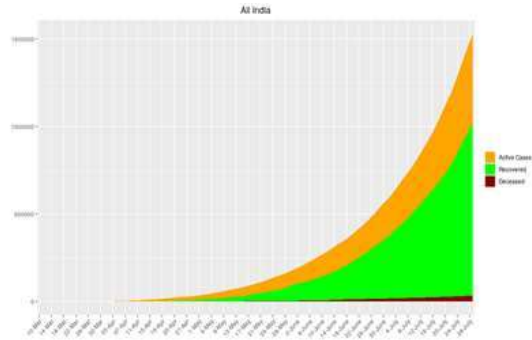
With admissions delayed across the country, the incoming batch of Residents are also facing difficulty in joining their newly allotted Institutes. The transport and travel bans throughout the country have done little to alleviate the logistical problems that they are facing.

Perhaps the worst affected are the batches of Residents who are currently undergoing training. Bereft of the opportunity to operate on a wide assortment of cases, owing to the ongoing crisis, they find themselves losing out on the most fertile period of their learning process. Many Residents aren't being able to do justice to their talents, as their energy and time are being diverted in fighting this deadly virus. Data collection for thesis cases has also suffered.

The solution lies in endeavouring to continue their learning process amidst this crisis. In the absence of routine cases, the Residents can work on other aspects of their development, and seek to bolster their theoretical knowledge. Regularly organized Webinars have proved to be a boon to this effect. Deprived of elective operations, the Residents can seek to increase practical understanding and surgical skills through cadaver dissections.

With each passing day, it seems increasingly inevitable that in the foreseeable future, we shall have to live with this deadly virus amidst us. With this realization, perhaps it will be better to not stop the routine care for the non-COVID patients. We must take active steps to try and restore normalcy in the training of our Residents. However, utmost importance must be given to adequate protection at all times.

In this bleak setting, the allure of cataclysmic thinking is often too strong to resist. Yet, we must remain optimistic and hope that we can emerge from this global contagion, unscathed and stronger.



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