



Reply

Response to the letter: Students' participation in collaborative research should be recognised

**Keywords:**

Medical students
 Medical education
 Collaborative research
 STARSurg
 ItSURG

Dear Sir/Madam,

We read with great interest the letter from the STARSurg group, highlighting the need to recognize the growing student participation in collaborative research [1]. We also noted Kazzazi et al. [2] counter-argument to this, who claimed that the workload of the individual collaborator in such a study is far lighter than that required by those in a study run by a relatively smaller number of researchers, and that comparative recognition was not justified. However, we feel such arguments underestimate the importance of collaborative research studies.

Collaborative research provides the opportunity for students to approach clinical research that they may have otherwise not encountered at undergraduate level. In many countries, such as Italy, active involvement in medical research is not included in the application process for a residency training program [3]. As a result, participation in research projects is not incentivized for students, with many research teams not welcoming medical students, in turn resulting in lack of exposure to this important domain of medical education.

In this scenario, collaborative research studies play a key role for research-minded medical students, allowing for the development of several skills [4], including confidence in analyzing scientific papers, exposure to the process of hypothesis validation, and understanding of the structure and requirements of an informed consent, all under the supervision of a trainee or consultant.

In the last few years, international collaboratives such as EuroSurg [5] and GlobalSurg [6], have provided unparalleled opportunities for medical students and trainees, with more than 140 Italian residents and medical students taking part in multicentre collaborative research projects. This has stimulated the interaction among Italian Universities and Hospitals and provided new opportunities for future collaborations, leading towards the formation of ItSURG [3], the first Italian surgical research collaborative.

Exposure of medical students to research will likely increase the number doctors engaging with clinical research and applying

evidence-based practice in the future. Collaborative research will develop the clinical and academic leaders of tomorrow and hence we feel the participation of students to collaborative research project is to be actively encouraged.

Ethical approval

Not necessary.

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Author contribution

A.S. and A.S. drafted the manuscript. F.P., S.P. and G.P. supervised the project and revised the writing. M.F.B., V.F. and L.G. discussed the content and commented on the letter at all stages. All authors read and approved the final version.

Conflicts of interest

Italian Surgical Research Group (<http://itsurg.org>, @it_surg) is an Italian research collaborative engaging medical students, trainees and surgeons in surgical research. All ItSURG studies are published using a collaborative authorship model.

Guarantor

Francesco Pata is the guarantor.

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