

Editorial

Challenges and Opportunities of Distant Learning in Plastic Surgery

The Corona Virus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has placed the medical world in unfamiliar territories. Traditionally, the medical teaching system depends upon in-person classes for the exchange of knowledge between residents and faculty. Grand rounds on actual patients are the epitome of resident training. The limitations of social distancing prevent us from following this model of education, which may lead to unfavorable effects on resident training.

Consequently one must adopt alternate modes of learning to bridge this gap, without incurring risk of coronavirus exposure. Globally, this has mostly been in the form of online meeting rooms that allow for a large number of people to meet and interact face-to-face. Distance learning has been studied in the literature, and 3 kinds of interactions leading to learning identified: interaction with content, interaction with instructor, and interaction among peers (1). No doubt there were initial setbacks and challenges in adapting this on a regular

basis. Stable internet connections and presence of appropriate equipment are examples more relevant to our country. However there are some unique opportunities that distance learning has provided. The ability to directly interact with the presenter keeps the audience engaged (2). Residents can benefit from being taught by subject masters from other countries. Even within a country we can hold meetings on a national level and provincial level. With the travel and lodging expenses eliminated, maximum participation can be achieved in these meetings.

Online learning can be likened to opening up a portal to the rest of the world, with no geographic limitations. Hopefully, this will continue in a hybrid form beyond the pandemic, where we can incorporate it into our traditional learning methods such that we can all benefit from the additional opportunities provided by distance learning.