Webinar on the perception of Brazilian, Italian, Swiss, and French medical science undergraduates about the COVID-19 pandemic: Experience Report

Ariela Borgmann[1], Andressa Becker Motta[1], Giovana Knapik Batista[1], Valéria Carolina Armas Villegas[1], Adriano Reimann[1], Elaine Rossi Ribeiro[1], Izabel Cristina Meister Coelho[1], Rogerio Saad Vaz[1]

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the need for Global Health (GH) understanding between medical science undergraduates and the need for new online teaching methods during social isolation. This paper aims to report the experience of an international webinar on the perception of medical science undergraduates from Brazil, Italy, France, and Switzerland about the Covid-19 pandemic. This activity allowed students comprehension of different realities faced by other countries, education on global epidemiology, comparison government and university maneuvers to handle the new coronavirus disease, and exchange of experiences among medical undergraduates concerning the ways of maintaining their mental well-being. Thereupon, it is necessary to implement GH activities within the medical curricula to promote a qualified education that addresses the needs of the digital and globalized world.

Keywords: Internationalization of medical education; Online Learning; Innovative methods; COVID-19.

Introduction

Sars-Cov-2, which causes Covid-19 respiratory tract infection, was identified at the end of 2019 within the Chinese city of Wuhan. From the end of 2019 to the start of August 2020, there have been about 18 million confirmed cases with the new coronavirus and approximately 700,000 deaths worldwide (WHO, 2020). Thereupon, the new virus has
become a public health emergency of international interest in the World Health Organization, on account of those alarming numbers.

To contain the spread of the virus and also the possible collapse of health services, it was recommended a series of measures that changed the economy, education, and jobs in order to maintain social isolation and others preventive protocols. Forthwith, medical education had to adapt abruptly to online learning and new teaching methods that adjust the digital world. Lectures were quickly developed to happen online, using various platforms that embrace technologically improved strategies that have already been proven, with high levels of involvement among medical science undergraduates (Sandhu and Wolf, 2020). Moreover, online education is propitious due to its global accessibility, ensuring that students, regardless of their location, can access webinars as they occur or can be recorded for later use (Sandhu and Wolf, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has also impacted on the necessity for Global Health understanding between medical science undergraduates. The emerging field of GH, which consists of "a broad and heterogeneous thematic area that focuses on the multiple challenges of medicine and health" (Knipper et al., 2015) is crucial to incorporate international experiences into the academic training in an increasingly interconnected world. Thereupon, teaching in this area should be done based on the concepts of health equity, collaboration, and multidisciplinary practice, with a simultaneous focus on patients, populations, and cross-cultural interactions (Stone et al., 2018) promoting a comprehensive, holistic and excellent medical education.

To promote intercultural dialogue, and leverage GH education, an activity was developed to connect medical students around the world and debate about their perspective on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This paper aims to report the experience of an international webinar on the perception of medical undergraduates from Brazil, Italy, France, and Switzerland about the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Experience Report**

An international webinar was promoted by the International Federation of Medical Students Associations of Brazil, the local committee of Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe (IFMSA Brazil FPP), on May 23rd, 2020. It had the aim of debating on the perception of medical undergraduates from Brazil, Italy, France, and Switzerland about the Covid-19 pandemic.

This event was broadcasted through YouTube Live, had over two thousand views, and brought synchronically students from Brazil, Italy, Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom, Indonesia, and Peru. The students were able to comprehend, from the perspective and experiences of their colleagues, the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in different countries. The main topics discussed were: what were the governmental approaches, how the university/medical school managed to continue their learning, what was the current panorama of the pandemic, and how they were maintaining salutary mental health during social isolation. The Webinar reached its proposed objective allowing the perception of different realities faced by other countries during the Covid-19 pandemic, education on global epidemiology, comparison of government and university maneuvers to handle the new coronavirus disease, and the exchange of experiences among medical undergraduates concerning the ways of maintaining their mental well-being and global health perspectives.

**Discussion**
Virtual learning has become a valuable resource to continue medical education, to share experiences and global strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic. The widespread use of technology for virtual communication, which is a necessity in a period of social isolation, will have a long-lasting effect on the complete continuum of medical education, residency, and continuing medical education. Moreover, online activities allow a broader and more iterative reach, which makes it possible to reach different continents and cultures (Swords et al., 2020).

New pedagogical approaches, which have a worldwide scope, allow the development of necessary skills for future medical professionals. Physicians necessitate leveraging the clinical and global health education with a nuanced perception of the social forces that affect health, the capacity to manage the political will, and the strength to lead institutions and dynamic programs (Drobac and Morse., 2016). The significance of educating cultural aspects, legal, social, and political framework for patient health and medical practice, has become more evident in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, after the increase of globalization and migration processes (Mews et al., 2018).

Medical students face foreign ways of thinking and acting associated with the health-disease process of an individual, which interferes, often unexpectedly, within the physician-patient relationship. Furthermore, it must be taken into attention that the wide variety in terms of understanding hierarchies, communication styles, the inclusion of family members, or the worth of faith and spirituality is not limited only to contact among patients with a migration background (Mews et al., 2018). Henceforth, we emphasize the importance of cultural competence and global health for medical education and practice. The incorporation of those dexterities within the medical curriculum, in times of globalization, is a prerequisite to ensure individualized and high-quality care to all patients (Mews et al., 2018).

Therefore, it is necessary to implement global health activities within the medical curricula to promote the education of excellence, which addresses the requirements of this connected world. Events as the webinar, which helps to ensure interaction and dialogue between medical students on a global level, must be held so students can perceive the various world realities and may be prepared to attend it.

Conclusion

The positive impact of diverse students sharing experiences, as promoted in the Webinar reported, endorses the importance of globalized medical education. The contact to different backgrounds allowed medical undergraduates to expand their knowledge on the Covid-19 pandemic and helped positively in maintaining the participant's mental well-being, given that it enabled social interaction. It highlights the significant gain to medical education provided by complementary events during social isolation. When possible, educational institutions should motivate students representative initiatives to support meaningful youth participation during graduation, once organizational and management skills are essential tools in professional life. The positive impact of diverse students sharing experiences, as promoted in the Webinar reported, endorses the importance of globalized medical education. The contact to different backgrounds allowed medical undergraduates to expand their knowledge on the Covid-19 pandemic and helped positively in maintaining the participant's mental well-being, given that it enabled social interaction. It highlights the significant gain to medical education provided by complementary events during social isolation. When possible, educational institutions should motivate students representative initiatives to support meaningful youth participation during graduation, once organizational and management skills are essential tools in professional life.
Take Home Messages

- Comprehensive global understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic is critical in medical education.
- New and innovative methods of dialogue are required during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Medical education must focus on global health and the global impact of human actions.
- It is crucial to perform activities that permit the connection of students worldwide to facilitate the understanding of the global health panorama.

Notes On Contributors

Ariela Borgmann, is a medical student at Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe, Curitiba, PR, Brazil. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8294-0167

Andressa Becker Motta, is a medical student at Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe, Curitiba, PR, Brazil. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8355-5519

Giovana Knapik Batista, is a medical student at Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe, Curitiba, PR, Brazil. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7191-8885

Valéria Carolina Armas Villegas, is a medical student at Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe, Curitiba, PR, Brazil. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1989-7738

Adriano Reimann, MD, is a master's student in the health science teaching program at Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe, Curitiba, PR, Brazil. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2259-3970

Elaine Rossi Ribeiro, RN, Ph.D, is a researcher of the Master's Program in Teaching in Health Sciences (PECS) and a professor of Medicine at Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe, Curitiba, PR, Brazil. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3492-217X

Izabel Cristina Meister Coelho, MD, Ph.D, is a researcher of the Master's Program in Teaching in Health Sciences (PECS) and a professor of Medicine at Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe, Curitiba, PR, Brazil. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4904-0746

Rogerio Saad Vaz, BMD, Ph.D, is a researcher of the Master's Program in Teaching in Health Sciences (PECS) and a professor of Medicine at Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe, Curitiba, PR, Brazil. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7537-5320

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the faculty members and students at the collaborating partner universities for their help and support of the webinar. Particular thanks to Clemancé Bouet, Faissal Nemer Hajar, Francesco Giorgio Giulio Merlo Pich, Giorgia Leticia Borgmann, and Ramona Doetsch.
Bibliography/References


Appendices

None.

Declarations

The author has declared that there are no conflicts of interest.

This has been published under Creative Commons "CC BY 4.0" (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Ethics Statement

Ethical statement was not required, according to the internal regulation of the School of Medicine of Faculdades Pequeno Príncipe (Curitiba, Brazil), since we report an experience that no human data was collected. https://faculdadespequenoprincipe.edu.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/reso5103.pdf

External Funding

This article has not had any External Funding