



The Current and Near Future Impact of COVID-19 on Aesthetic Fellowship Programs

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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has caused a significant impact on the United States healthcare field due to the high intensity of cases as well as shortages of PPE, hospital beds, and ventilators. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) originally called for all elective and non-emergent cases to be postponed until the COVID-19 curve of cases had flattened. This particularly affects surgical fields, as they had to reevaluate and shift current practices in order to minimize the spread and allocate proper PPE and resources for COVID-19 positive patients and frontline workers. This further affects surgical residencies and fellowships, aesthetic fellowship surgery included, where most of the training depends on surgical experience. These changes caused programs to shift focus and establish rapid solutions so that residents and fellows can still receive training without delay. **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on current and upcoming aesthetic surgery fellows has not yet been evaluated.**

METHODS



Anonymous web based surveys were created using Qualtrics®. The surveys asked questions pertaining to adjustments and impact on current fellow training, as well as possible impact on fellows starting in 2020 and 2021.



Aesthetic Surgery Fellowship Directors and Fellows with active programs in the United States were found through the Aesthetic Society (ASAPS).



Directors were initially sent a 23 question survey that was collected from April 18, 2020 through May 14, 2020.

Directors received a 7 question follow up survey that was collected from June 6, 2020 through August 18, 2020.



Fellows received a 23 question survey that was collected from June 6, 2020 through August 18, 2020.



Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel®.

RESULTS AND TABLES

Characteristic	Significant Impact	Moderate Impact	Mild Impact	No impact
Overall impact of COVID-19 experience	57.9%	21.1%	21.1%	0%
Impact on educational experience	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0%
Impact on surgical experience	47.4%	26.3%	21.1%	5.3%
Impact on becoming a well-trained aesthetic surgeon	11.1%	33.3%	55.6%	0%
Impact on new fellows starting July 2020	57.9%	15.8%	26.3%	0%
	22.2%	33.3%	44.4%	0%
	5.3%	15.8%	47.4%	31.6%
	0%	11.1%	66.7%	22.2%
	5.3%	36.8%	31.6%	26.3%

Table 1: Director (black) and fellow (green) responses to questions regarding to overall impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of training.

Characteristic	75-100% reduction	50-75% reduction	25-50% reduction	0-25% reduction
Impact on normal day-to-day workload	68.4%	26.3%	0%	5.3%
Impact on amount of clinical education	11.1%	22.2%	33.3%	33.3%
Impact on day-to-day workload of fellowships with a focused interest	57.9%	26.3%	5.3%	10.5%
	11.1%	33.3%	11.1%	44.4%
	83.3%	0%	0%	16.7%
	0%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%

Table 2: Director (black) and fellow (green) responses to questions regarding daily impact of COVID-19

Questions	Response
Still performing surgical cases	36.8%
Fellows do not participate in Telehealth clinics	100%
Using resources to substitute for lost clinical/surgical experiences	47.4%
Does anticipate delays with new fellow start date in July	22%
Anticipates issues with securing a job after fellowship ends	94.7%
Was pulled from fellowship duties to participate as part of care teams for COVID-19 patients	100%
	15.8%
	33.3%
	11.1% pulled 22.2% volunteered

Table 3: Director (black) and fellow (green) responses to questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate: 65.5% (19/29) response rate for the initial director survey, a 31% (9/29) rate for the director follow up survey, and a 28% (9/32) rate for the fellow specific survey

- All directors and fellows reported that the pandemic had some impact on aesthetic fellow training.
- The majority of fellows and directors perceive that it will have some impact on the fellows ability to becoming a well-trained aesthetic surgeon
- A majority of fellows and directors reported that educational and surgical experience was affected
- Predicted impact on future fellows was not as significant as current fellows
- Many specific types of aesthetic surgery were affected, with facial aesthetic surgery being greatly impacted
- The pandemic has caused financial strains on some programs, with 1 program having to shut down
- Almost half of program directors reported that their fellowships do not participate in telehealth – something that can be used to help mitigate loss

Quotes From Directors

“The timing of the pandemic was toward the end of the program, which worked out well because skills had already been learned. However, fellows may have a hard time finding jobs after due to financial constrains caused by the pandemic”

“Our 2020 fellow was not able to get the proper paperwork during the pandemic and had to decline”

CONCLUSIONS

COVID-19 has impacted the clinical and educational aspects of Aesthetic surgery fellowships which can affect the completeness of fellows training, however through telemedicine, educational efforts, and standardization of new guidelines, this loss can be mitigated. Ongoing evaluation and shared experiences can assist fellowships in customizing programs to provide well-rounded education during the pandemic.

For full paper and references please scan QR code
Email: fv0868@wayne.edu for additional questions

