Involving the next generation of cardiovascular surgeons

V.Q. Sier, MSc, Joris J. Blok, MD, PhD, F. Akca, MD, PhD, J. Hjortnaes, MD, PhD, Joost R. van der Vorst, MD, PhD

PII: S2666-2736(24)00133-5
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xjon.2024.05.012
Reference: XJON 1080

To appear in: JTCVS Open

Received Date: 24 May 2024
Accepted Date: 24 May 2024

Please cite this article as: Sier VQ, Blok JJ, Akca F, Hjortnaes J, van der Vorst JR, Involving the next generation of cardiovascular surgeons, JTCVS Open (2024), doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xjon.2024.05.012.

This is a PDF file of an article that has undergone enhancements after acceptance, such as the addition of a cover page and metadata, and formatting for readability, but it is not yet the definitive version of record. This version will undergo additional copyediting, typesetting and review before it is published in its final form, but we are providing this version to give early visibility of the article. Please note that, during the production process, errors may be discovered which could affect the content, and all legal disclaimers that apply to the journal pertain.

Copyright © 2024 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery.
V.Q. Sier, MSc, Joris J. Blok, MD, PhD, F. Akca MD, PhD, J. Hjortnaes MD, PhD, Joost R. van der Vorst MD, PhD*

1 Department of Surgery, Leiden University Medical Center, Leiden, the Netherlands; v.q.sier@lumc.nl
2 Department of Surgery, Groene Hart Hospital, Gouda, the Netherlands; joris.blok@ghzn.nl
3 Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Catharina Hospital, Eindhoven, The Netherlands; ferdi.akca@catharinaziekenhuis.nl
4 Department of Thoracic Surgery, Leiden University Medical Center, Leiden, the Netherlands; j.hjortnaes@lumc.nl

*Corresponding

Central picture: Mentorship along the stepping stones of a surgical career is key to retain young talent.

Wordcount: 500
Dear editor,

The projected increase in cardiovascular patients alongside the concerning perception of waning interest in Thoracic and Cardio-Vascular surgery (TCVS) presents a critical challenge: how do we engage the next generation? Vogel and colleagues highlighted interest groups as a critical first stepping stone to kindle student enthusiasm and provided a starter kit guide.\(^1\) Both the need for student initiative and faculty support were emphasized; students take the lead in organization and outlines, while surgeons and residents provide opportunities and guidance.

Considering that surgical specialties in general, and TCVS in particular, have always been known for long work hours, it might be that shared intergenerational passion for the field itself is crucial for a fulfilling career. The 20\(^\text{th}\) century epitomized this passionate spirit, with cardiovascular surgeons such as Dr. Alexis Carrel, Dr. Nina Braunwald, and Dr. Michael DeBakey, inspiring young talent with their relentless commitment. Aspiring surgeons found a magnetic pull toward TCVS, and in turn, the field, including its long hours and commitment, was equally alluring and fulfilling to them. The current generation of medical students appears to have different expectations, particularly concerning work-life balance and work ethics, which in turn influence their specialty choices.\(^2,3\)

Nowadays, students’ initial interest in TCVS can be readily sparked by various means of exposure. Existing platforms like the Next Generation Webinar of the EACTS, interest groups as described by Vogel et al., or more general associations such as the Dutch Surgical Society for Medical Students (DSSMS), offer a diverse range of options for students to explore their interests.
Transitioning to more “hands-on” involvement, however, which may significantly contribute to the long-term appeal and retention of individuals in TCVS, requires more active involvement of surgical mentors. Supporting activities such as clinical internships, research, and conference attendance relies on strong mentor-mentee relationships. These relationships develop over time and are crucial in nurturing professional growth and promoting collaboration, crucial to modern day surgery. In addition, mentorship facilitates the transmission of foundational values within the field, while also providing a platform to address the specific needs of young professionals.

Engaging future cardiovascular surgeons hinges on an intergenerational collaborative effort. Understanding the core appeal of TCVS, while recognizing changing needs and emphasizing the importance of commitment, is paramount. We firmly believe that, by actively involving and guiding medical students, we can ignite their passion and ensure a thriving and accessible future for TCVS.

References