



UPGRADING STANDARDS IN POST-GRADUATE SURGICAL EDUCATION

A strong post-graduate medical education system can help ensure that physicians have the knowledge and skills they need to provide high-quality health care that meets the needs of the Palestinian population. This is a priority of the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the Palestine Medical Council, and key local stakeholders in the medical and health fields.

That is why the USAID-supported Palestinian Health Capacity Project (PHCP), through its partner Juzoor for Health & Social Development, facilitated the first-ever revision of the Palestinian National General Surgery residency program curriculum. The previous curriculum, developed in 2008, had never been updated to take into account feedback from students and clinical supervisors regarding its applicability to the Palestinian context. Further, Palestinian surgeons needed a more comprehensive curriculum that would provide up-to-date, evidence-based information and concepts, taking a competency-based approach with a clear, systematic mentoring and evaluation process.

As part of the revision process—championed by the Medical Council and the Palestinian Ministry of Health—Palestinian surgeons and other major stakeholders engaged in enthusiastic, consultative discussions and provided feedback on the new content and format. Their participation and investment in the new curriculum will encourage all Palestinian teaching hospitals to adopt and promote it. The Medical Council led this participatory process—notably through the Secretary General and the members of the High Scientific Committee for General Surgery & Sub-Surgical Specialties—and has shown commitment and leadership in advocating for forward-thinking concepts to be integrated into the curriculum.

As the revision process began, stakeholders discussed and agreed upon a unified vision to guide it: *“The vision of the Palestinian general surgeon is one who is a safe, competent, and professional specialist providing excellent evidence-based patient care, and who contributes to promoting the profession of general surgery. A Palestinian general surgeon’s care is provided in respectful collaboration with other health care professionals and is delivered through effective communication with patients and families, within the boundaries of the general surgery specialty, within the surgeon’s own professional expertise, appropriate to the health care setting and the patient’s preferences, and to the wider social context.”*



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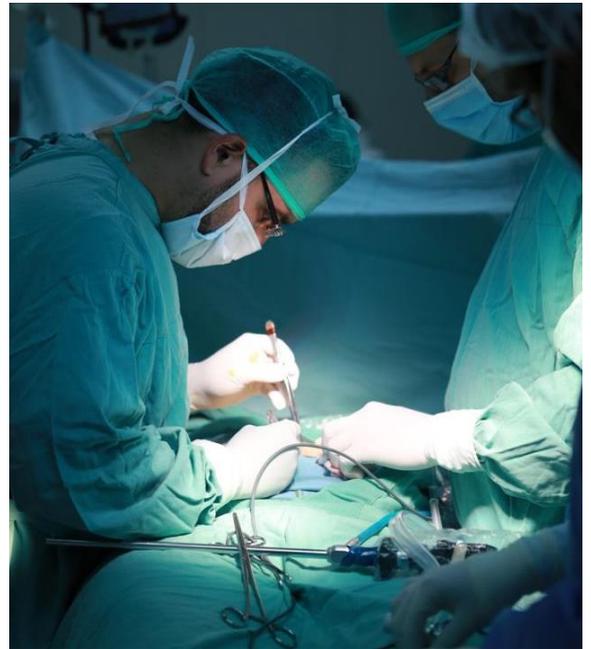
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Local and international consultants then drafted the revised curriculum based on this vision, with ongoing input from, consultation with, and agreement from stakeholders.

The resulting curriculum standardizes post-graduate general surgery medical education according to up-to-date, evidence-based knowledge and practices, and will ultimately improve the quality of surgical care. And it is applicable and realistic in the Palestinian context. The nearly 50-page document explains the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills that learners (residents) are expected to have by the end of their specialty training in the general surgery Palestinian National Residency Program and provides a detailed guide for their training across all years of the program.

A unique feature of this curriculum is that it introduces a competency framework (“skills domains”) adapted from international models to serve as a basis for post-graduate medical education. It can help guide other specialty training programs that seek to update and transform post-graduate medical education according to a competency-based approach.



Stakeholders agreed upon six skills domains:

1. Surgical specialty
2. Interpersonal and communication skills
3. Teamwork and interprofessional collaboration
4. Leadership promotion
5. Teaching and learning
6. Professionalism and ethics.

The skills domains emphasize nontechnical skills, which are part of the well-rounded education necessary to achieving the stakeholders’ vision of the Palestinian surgeon.

This new curriculum is useful to everyone in the surgery residency program: the learners (residents), teachers (clinical instructors), administration and management (program directors), and the Medical Council, which will use it as a benchmark for educating future surgeons. The process by which the general surgery curriculum was revised is a model for revising other post-graduate medical sub-specialty curricula.

Raising standards in medical and nursing education can raise the quality of health care. PHCP implementing partners IntraHealth International and Juzoor look forward to continuing to support competency-based and evidence-based reviews of national health training curricula in priority areas, and to improving the quality of health care for the Palestinian people.

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