

Training in Advanced Laparoscopic Surgery in India

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ABSTRACT

More and more evidence are supporting superiority or non-inferiority of laparoscopic surgery. It seems that laparoscopic surgery has a prominent future. In India, there are very few centers which provide advanced laparoscopic service to patients. The reason for this is a lack of adequate training and training options in India. It is a high time to realize that advanced laparoscopic surgery is a necessity for gastrointestinal (GI) surgeons. It is important to compulsorily include the training of advanced laparoscopic surgery in the curriculum of GI surgery training. There should be a structured program with well designed training module to improve healthcare caliber in our country.

Keywords: Laparoscopy, Training, Advanced laparoscopic surgery, India.

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INTRODUCTION

Laparoscopic surgery has become an integral part of the armamentarium of general and gastrointestinal (GI) surgeons. Some of the laparoscopic procedures have become the standard of care now. Plenty of recent literature support either superiority or noninferiority of certain advanced laparoscopic procedures; like laparoscopic colorectal surgeries.¹⁻³ Laparoscopic surgery may offer better cosmesis, lesser pain and wound complications, shorter hospital stay and other short-term benefits.^{1,4} The era has now arrived where surgeon has to provide the best option to the patient as patients have become well-aware and inquire for better available options. At present option of hardcore advanced laparoscopic surgery is available at very few centers in India. One of the reasons for this

gap is that not many surgeons are trained in advanced laparoscopic surgery and there are very few recognized options for the training is available in India. There is lot more to improve in training of advanced laparoscopic surgery including the structure of the program in our country.

CURRENT SCENARIO IN INDIA: TRAINING AND PRACTICE

Basic laparoscopic surgery is routinely performed by majority of the general and GI surgeons. For advanced laparoscopic surgery; either surgeon needs to have formal training of GI surgery or an extensive experience of open GI surgery. Currently, some of the GI surgeons and very few general surgeons perform advanced laparoscopic surgeries. Without adequate exposure of open surgery it is difficult to expand the field of advanced laparoscopic surgery for a particular surgeon especially general surgeon. Currently, available recognized training options for GI surgery in India are Master of Chirurgical (MCh) (total seats 32)⁵ and Diplomate of National Board (DNB) (total seats 31)⁶ in GI surgery. Majority of MCh centers are government centers, most of these centers provide excellent exposure of open surgery with variable exposure of advanced laparoscopic surgery. These centers were started in an open era and have given some of the best leaders of GI surgery to this country. But the adaptation of advanced laparoscopic surgery has lagged behind in these centers and is one of the reasons for limited development of advanced laparoscopic surgery in India. Majority of DNB centers are private centers; few of them provide good hands on training. Exposure of open and laparoscopic surgery varies a lot from center to center. At either of these centers hands on training of advanced laparoscopic surgery is quite limited because even for some of the consultants; advanced laparoscopic surgery is in a learning phase. Fellowship program by National Board of Examination (FNB) in minimal access surgery is a 2 year fellowship program provided by National Board of Examination. Few centers which confer FNB are doing majority of laparoscopy work. So after MS in general surgery for a surgeon with inadequate exposure of open advanced GI surgery it is difficult to grasp advanced laparoscopy and majority of them adapt basic laparoscopic surgery and some of the advanced procedures. They also have fear about their limitations of open conversion if requires or any complications. Certain

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centers offer unrecognized fellowship and training program in laparoscopic surgery to the general surgeons. In view of limited recognized options available; these options are worth having but how much quality training that would provide is questionable. Some of the associations also furnish fellowship in minimal access surgery, which includes 3 to 4 days training by didactic lectures followed by practical examination on endotrainer which seems inadequate for surgeons who are not adequately trained previously. So, overall options to learn advanced laparoscopic surgery in India are limited.

WHERE IS THE GAP?

The few training courses for advanced laparoscopy available currently in India, and they are not well organized. The curriculum is not well structured. Many of the fellowships are unrecognized. Majority of these training programs provide exposure of basic laparoscopic surgery with very limited training in advanced laparoscopic surgery. Advanced laparoscopic surgery is not just a replication of open surgery; it needs understanding of different ergonomics and concepts. The laparoscopic anatomy is quite different from open surgery. Majority of the surgeons try self-learning; but they either fail to learn or they learn certain limited procedures and cannot expand this field fully. Many of them compromised the quality of surgery while trying to perform advanced procedures with laparoscopy without formal training. Those who learn by their selves need longer learning curve. There are very few surgeons who catch up the real advanced laparoscopy by their own. Another hurdle in training of the advanced laparoscopic procedures is that many of the senior teachers at academic institutions those who are excellent in providing open surgery training have not adopted advanced laparoscopic surgery. This factor also restricts the development of advanced laparoscopic procedures in the department.

THE WAY FORWARD

Ways to learn laparoscopic surgery are practice on endotrainer, training on simulator, animal and cadaver model training and supervised hands on training on patients. Endotrainer practice is good to develop hand eye co-ordination but not enough to perform surgery on humans. Facility of training on simulator, animal and cadaver model is available at very few places in India.⁷ Although there are some ethical issues, but the best training module would be supervised hands on training.⁸

The way forward to develop advanced laparoscopic surgery in our country is to train surgeons to perform minimal invasive surgery. Every center which provides

GI surgery training should be performing advanced laparoscopic procedures. The training program should be well structured and trainees must get adequate exposure and hands on training in open surgeries, basic and advanced laparoscopic procedures. There should be a list of surgeries prepared by an authorized body; the trainee must have minimum exposure to those procedures and minimum hands on training for listed surgical procedures. The training courses should be recognized by authorized body and there should be a well-organized assessment program for trainees and institution as well. The institution must have a faculty who is well verse with the advanced laparoscopic surgery; for which there is also a need to train the trainers.

SUMMARY

Advanced laparoscopic surgery is the future and will become a necessity for the surgeon in coming time. A well designed structured training in advanced laparoscopic surgery is the need of the time. It will raise the standard of healthcare system in our country. Formal proper training reduces the learning curve of the surgeon and in turn will reduce the complications.

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