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EFAS fellowship program

“Traveling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller.” Ibn Battuta

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.” Augustine of Hippo

The World is changing and changing fast. The COVID pandemic, AI generalization, internet ubiquity, climate emergency, and social and cultural transformation have, in recent years, an unquestionable impact on how we see the world and how we live our lives. Everything looks different, and we are facing many new challenges.

Medical Education is no exception, and Foot and Ankle Learning isn't.

EFAS is a continental society created to defend and enhance Foot and Ankle Surgery in Europe. So, EFAS has a clear responsibility to be dedicated to education and training to educate and train physicians engaged in this area of expertise.

Fellowships are fundamental for the education of physicians, especially young surgeons, allowing them to increase surgical skills and develop an interest in research and publication [1]. Also, fellowship-trained surgeons have more career opportunities [2]. These were uncontroversial statements a few years ago and probably still are, but the COVID-19 pandemic shed new light on this topic. Lockdown prevented people from circulating even for educational purposes. Travel restrictions were imposed for long periods, so alternative techniques of sharing knowledge and teaching skills had to be discovered and implemented, most of the time using online resources. So, several formative online tools were made available, replacing presential education; even practical training like ultrasounds could be done online [3].

The Pandemic was controlled, and most things returned to “normal,” but online tools (like webinars, virtual Congresses, and Online courses) are still here. People recognize their merits, making these educational opportunities more available and more accessible to organize, with better turnouts and less financial/ecological burden. Social media is increasingly present in education programs and communication between people [4].

On the other hand, there is the feeling that young surgeons are less keen to travel for educational purposes, spending time away from their families and friends and replacing the traditional presential “events” with online alternatives.

Despite all the above, there is a strong impression that online communication can't completely replace the face-to-face experience and that in-person activities can be more efficient than virtual ones [5]. Also, there is a strong belief that learning opportunities (like fellowships) can

open the way to better career options [6]. Foot and ankle fellowship programs often require their fellows to participate in research during their fellowships, and research production remains an essential component in consideration for academic faculty career advancement [7].

EFAS has put considerable effort into a Fellowship Program. EFAS, as said before, pursues the best options to educate European Foot and Ankle surgeons. Although online opportunities should be endorsed and developed, the role of face-to-face, shoulder-to-shoulder, hands-on teaching is (for the time being) irreplaceable. Therefore, we have been developing several types of fellowships that can address the needs and ambitions of young European surgeons:

- Traveling Fellowship – three weeks of experience visiting 5 top European F&A sites, in two routes, including the EFAS annual conference.
- Research Fellowship – 3–6 months developing a research project in a renowned European research facility in the subject area.
- Clinical Fellowship – Short-term (1 to three months) complete clinical experience in a highly regarded European F&A Department
- Surgeon-to-Surgeon Visit – a short visit of an experienced surgeon to another senior physician to exchange experience and knowledge.
- International Fellowships – with partners on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

The fellow who fulfills one of these educational experiences becomes part of the EFAS family, a group of passionate Foot and Ankle fanatics who give their best every day to enhance this field of expertise on our continent.

So, we strongly recommend to all F&A fans to check the EFAS website or be attentive to EFAS social media because a formative opportunity that can address their educational needs can come your way.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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