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Effect of Geopolitical Forces on Neurosurgical Training in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract: Effect of Geopolitical Forces on Neurosurgical Training in Sub-Saharan Africa

Background

The population of Sub-Saharan Africa suffers from a critical shortage and maldistribution of healthcare professionals, especially highlighted in surgical subspecialties such as neurosurgery. In light of the Lancet Report and the World Health Organization's directive to provide essential surgical care through the developing world, solutions need to be found to close this training and distribution gap.

Methods

Methods correcting the situation will only succeed if one understands the geopolitical forces which have shaped the distribution of healthcare in the region and continue to this day. Solutions have evolved from service to service with education. The partnering organizations, The Foundation of International Education in Neurological Surgery and the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies have supported neurosurgical training in the developing world including curriculum, equipment, facilities, certification, and local acceptance, with a goal of developing a self-sustaining program within the developing country.

Results

These ideas heavily rely on partnerships to address classic geopolitical forces including geography, drought, warfare, ethnic tensions, poverty and lack of training facilities. Each can be addressed through partnerships such as development of dyads with programs in developed countries and ongoing programs owned by the countries in question, but partnered with multiple international societies, institutions, and universities.

Conclusion

This paper provides both a historic and topical overview of the forces at work which need to be addressed for success in delivering specialized care. This must always result in a self-sustaining program operated by the people of the home country with worldwide support through philanthropy and partnerships.

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