Attracting undergraduate students to surgical specialties through a week-long summer course
A 5-year single-center experience

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Background
Choosing which specialty to pursue after graduating may be challenging for medical students. In order for students to make informed career choices, they should be exposed to clinical practice early on. A surgical summer school was created to introduce students to multiple specialties active in the operating theatre.

The objective of this study was to investigate the effects of the surgical summer school on the participants’ interests and career choices.

Methods
The surgical summer school is a voluntary five-day summer program that combines personal testimonies, interactive video- and livestreamed case discussions and various hands-on workshops, where multiple simulation-based tools are used. All sessions are supervised by experienced surgical staff members.

Participants were asked to complete questionnaires about demographic information and their career choice interests before and after the course, together with a subjective questionnaire about the course.

All participants who completed the questionnaires were e-mailed after two years to assess their final career choices.

Results
In September 2017, forty-one third-year medical students participated in the surgical summer school.

On the subjective questionnaires, participants agreed that:

- Teaching methods were appropriate (35/41; 85%)
- Their personal learning goals were achieved (35/41; 85%)
- The content was quite well adjusted to the knowledge (25/41; 61%)

Between 2013 and 2017 a total of 243 students participated in the summer school.

- The career choice questionnaires completed by 86% (209/243)
- Students were generally more willing to apply for a surgical specialty

Two year after the summer school half of the respondents had chosen a surgical specialty.

- 28 of these candidates were accepted into surgical training

Conclusion
This summer school has been organized to inform and attract participants to surgical specialties. The course is well-balanced and results in a considerable amount of students making a well-considered choice for surgical specialties.