

First Lap-Passer – after 3 years

I am currently an ST5 trainee in general surgery in the North East deanery. Having graduated from the University of Baghdad in 2005, I completed my foundation years in Baghdad coming to the UK in 2013. I started my job as a clinical fellow in Northumbria Healthcare NHS foundation Trust in 2014 without any laparoscopic experience! During my first year I was very keen to establish my laparoscopic skills. I was lucky that I had supportive consultant trainers who took me through generic laparoscopic skills and taught me the basics. In 2015 I attended the ALSGBI annual meeting in Southport, it was the first time that LapPass™ was set up and opened for trainees to test their skills. Looking at the tasks gave me the impression that passing this test was going to be challenging. I always have been, and still am, looking for challenges to stretch my limits. This was ingrained in me early days of my life from my father who always used to tell me ‘don’t tell me what is your mark in the exam, tell me where it is ranked in your class!’ Whether this good or bad it has raised in me the spirit of competition to quite high levels. I was therefore up for the challenge to see where I would come out.

At that time LapPass had four stations where basic laparoscopic challenges were set up. To increase the challenge the stations are time limited. These were not easy tasks to perform especially with time limit, particularly the challenge to manipulate Polo mints. At that meeting I was one of two only managed to complete the tasks successfully and I was awarded LapPass. ‘Dad I don’t know if I was fastest’.

It was great experience and achievement for me and found it helpful that I was the first ‘LapPasser’. LapPass has added to my portfolio and a stepping stone to help get me into a formal training program in the following application round. Without doubt, the LapPass achievement, , has boosted my confidence in my ability in laparoscopic surgery I was able to show my trainers this achievement which I felt has increased their confidence in my laparoscopic skills. I had some clinical experience prior to this, I had less than 40 laparoscopic cholecystectomies, 35 laparoscopic appendectomies and about 20 diagnostic laparoscopies in my logbook and the feedback of my trainers was they were more happy to observe me operating knowing I had LapPass. This has reflected very well in my logbook. Since completing lapPass and moving on in my training my logbook has developed more quickly than I hoped for. I have in my logbook more than 250 laparoscopic cholecystectomies (most of them level 4), 180 laparoscopic appendectomies (most of them level 4), 20 laparoscopic colectomies (level 3 and few right hemicolectomes level 4), more than 50 laparoscopic hernia (level 3&4) and 15 laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomies and gastric bypasses (level 3). For someone like me who is now ST5 and started laparoscopic skills just four and half years ago these numbers are certainly higher than expected for the level of the training and are helping me to keep progressing through my training programme. I do strongly believe that LapPass has helped me. , The key

was it was something that triggered confidence in me, my ability to learn and perform laparoscopic procedures. LapPass was like a gate way opening and happened at the right time for me.

Looking back I do believe that LapPass was a cornerstone in my career. If you have developed the basic laparoscopic skills to get LapPass you can be confident you have the basic ability to perform operations, an awareness of the safety standards, and in a timely fashion. I suspect that LapPass is not far from being integrated into the curriculum and will be key core skill requirement for general surgical trainees. LapPass provides the challenge that can test skills under time pressure which we are not usually so much focused on during our real life operating. I certainly enjoyed my LapPass experience and I would urge the trainees to engage and work hard toward LapPass certification which will boost self-confidence and accelerate achieving basic and higher laparoscopic skills.

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