

Dr Mokadam is a consultant for Medtronic, Abbott, SynCardia, and Carmat. Dr Hwalek reported no conflicts of interest.

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### REPLY: IN PURSUIT OF THE UNFILLED POSITION

#### Reply to the Editor:

This year's Match, like the rest of the world, was unworldly. In the wake of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic, enthusiastic medical students opened their envelopes in social isolation while on video chats and posted their joy endlessly on social media. At the same time, programs proudly posted mugshots of their incoming classes, praising their prowess and diversity. What happened to the Unmatched? The Unfilled?

In this letter to the Editor in the *Journal*, Vervoort and Velazco-Davila<sup>1</sup> describe the large gap in training cardiothoracic (CT) surgeons required to fulfill the workforce demand in low-income countries. The authors address 2 key points. First is that we have an inadequate workforce in training, especially in low-income countries such as Brazil, and second, higher-income countries do not have easy pathways for training international graduates. While

assertively discussing these individual points, the cumulative summary is the end point that more fully trained CT surgeons are needed to address pending universal shortages.

To address the workforce shortages worldwide, a goal for the specialty should be optimizing the influx of trainees into CT surgery programs. Unfilled positions have allocated funding and educational organization in place that should be maximized. Academic partnerships and educational assistance, in the stated countries like Ecuador without any training program, could be of value. Notably, such partnerships can be fraught with red tape surrounding funding, licensing, credentialing, and even immigration. The international workforce shortage will need to be addressed at all levels from the leaders of the specialty to interested medical students and trainees across the world. Match day should be a time when a specialty as unique as CT surgery should not go unfilled and no future CT surgeon go unmatched.

*Ann E. Hwalek, DO, MS  
Nahush A. Mokadam, MD  
Division of Cardiac Surgery  
The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center  
Columbus, Ohio*

#### Reference

1. Vervoort D, Velazco-Davila L. Closing the gap by filling the gaps: leveraging international partnerships to train the world's cardiac surgical. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg.* 2020;160:e51-2.

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