

The authors reported no conflicts of interest.

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

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REPLY: EXTINCT? FAR FROM IT

Reply to the Editor:

As yet another match day has passed us by, the debate over the lack of interest in pursuing a career in cardiothoracic surgery continues. Lodhia and colleagues¹ recently provided an additional perspective of

medical students in the United Kingdom regarding their experiences, or lack thereof, and how it impacted their pursuit of a cardiothoracic surgery. With regards to exposure, many have stated the impact of early and continued exposure to cardiothoracic surgeons.^{2,3} As we have previously written, the benefits of a cardiothoracic surgery rotation extend beyond those who pursue cardiothoracic surgery,⁴ and the presence of cardiothoracic surgeons on medical school curriculum committees and involvement with general surgery departments is essential to provide exposure for many individuals.

Perhaps the more important discussion is the perception versus reality of interest and pursuit of cardiothoracic surgery. In the most recent National Resident Matching Program match data, there were a total of 459,049 students who applied for the match with only 38 positions available in (integrated) thoracic surgery. For those 38 spots there were 120 applicants (78 of which were fourth-year medical students) with a 100% fill rate.⁵ In addition, in the match for thoracic surgery independent programs following general surgery, there were 96 positions with 88 filled, for a fill rate of 91.7%.⁶ These numbers indicate that cardiothoracic surgery remains very competitive.

Cardiothoracic surgeons have remarkably transformed a specialty in low demand with numerous unfilled positions to one with many more applicants than spots. While we should continue our current efforts to provide initial and continued exposure in medical school, we should also focus on attracting the best medical students and general surgery

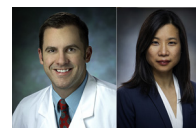
residents, and ensuring individuals who are bright and motivated get an appropriate exposure to the field. The demand for cardiothoracic surgeons nationwide will continue for the foreseeable future. We are not going extinct.

Asvin M. Ganapathi, MD
Nahush A. Mokadam, MD
Division of Cardiac Surgery
Department of Surgery
The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center
Columbus, Ohio

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REPLY: PRESERVING OUR OSLERIAN HERITAGE

Reply to the Editor:

We can only instill principles, put the student in the right path, give him method, teach him how to study, and early to discern between essentials and non-essentials.

—Sir William Osler¹