



NIHR Global Surgery Unit Annual meeting: Hub visit

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Introduction

The annual NIHR Global Surgery Unit meeting took place on the 11th and 12th September 2024 in Cancun, Mexico. The event was attended by 167 participants including doctors, researchers, medical students and other multidisciplinary team members, from Benin, Colombia, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States. The event allowed attendees to reflect on the research activities of 2024, and receive updates and share ideas on the new projects developed by the Unit. Following the main event, a smaller delegation from the United Kingdom alongside members of the Hub team visited Veracruz, where the Hub hospital (Hospital Espanol de Veracruz) is located.

Purpose of the visit

During the Hub visit, several activities were conducted aiming to provide education and training for capacity building, pursue community engagement and provide support and disseminate new trials and studies, including DRAGON, ALLIGATOR and SurgPass.

Education and training

A research training session was delivered to 150 medical students at the Facultad de Medicina Miguel Alemán Valdez de la Universidad Veracruzana (Miguel Alemán Valdez Faculty of Medicine of the University of Veracruz). This session explored the concept of research and audit, provided the basic principles of quantitative and qualitative research and an introduction to different study designs. Similar training was also delivered to a group of trainee doctors in the Hospital Español, Veracruz.

Research support

Some members of the team visited the Hospital General De Boca Del Rio and Hospital Espanol de Veracruz, to deliver site initiation visits for the DRAGON trial. The two visits were attended by the trial Principal Investigators (PIs), as well as nurses, doctors, sterilisation officers and members of the infection control teams. Following the visits, members of the team supported the hospital PIs in filling in the hospital level survey for DRAGON, and some useful feedback was obtained. Focus groups on the provision of surgical textiles, and on the development of new studies (ALLIGATOR, SurgPass) were also conducted.

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Community Engagement

As part of the visit several community engagement and involvement (CEI) activities were carried out at the Vicente Lombardo Toledano Primary School- a collaborative effort between the GSU Mexico Hub and several organisations, including Grupo Reto, a national breast cancer charity; AMANC Veracruz, a paediatric cancer society; and Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF), a government institution dedicated to improving family welfare. The event, attended by 150 pupils aged 6-12, featured interactive workshops focused on health and hygiene, covering handwashing, proper nutrition, oral care, and recognising the early signs of cancer. These workshops were designed to instill healthy habits in children from a young age and to raise awareness of crucial health issues. Additionally, volunteer medical interns provided basic first-aid training for the teachers, addressing a need identified through previous community discussions. The event concluded with a meeting between GSU's Birmingham team and the Mexico Hub's community advisory group, composed of local leaders from Grupo Reto, AMANC, DIF, and the school's principal. The group, along with the GSU CEI manager and Global Patient Representative, discussed strategies for upcoming

funding applications, focusing on cancer patient engagement and the importance of early cancer screening and education.

Mini-conference

After an inspiring presentation delivered to the visiting team by Dr Antonio Ramos-de la Medina on the history and mission of the Hospital Espanol de Veracruz, the Hub visit concluded with a mini-conference attended by 70 members of the hospital staff. The mini-conference started with a welcome address from Dr Antonio Ramos-de la Medina and Prof Dion Morton. It then continued with overviews on capacity building and CEI activities, a session on early career research and impact of collaborative research and a focus on the new cohort study developed by the NIHR Global Surgery Unit, centred around appendicitis and emergency care. The mini-conference concluded with a presentation on breast cancer care in Mexico after the COVID-19 pandemic and one on the role of artificial intelligence in surgery. The visit was successful and highlighted the importance of in-person visits to strengthen the relationship between teams and optimise collaboration in research.

Figure 1-4: Meeting photos

