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A world map with countries colored in red and grey. Red countries include Canada, the United States, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, India, China, and Australia. Grey countries include Russia, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, India, China, and Australia. In the bottom left corner, there is a logo featuring a caduceus (a staff with two snakes entwined and wings at the top) over a blue globe, with the text 'I/SSS' below it.

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Table 1. IASSS Symposia 2014-2017

| Year | Host University | Location | Theme | Number of delegates |
|------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 2014 | University of Cape Town | Cape Town, South Africa | ‘Pioneering in surgery’ | 116 |
| 2015 | University of Queensland | Brisbane, Australia | ‘Inspiration, Innovation, Action’ | 400 |
| 2016 | University of Namibia | Windhoek, Namibia | ‘Back to Basics’ | 90 |
| 2017 | University of Bucharest | Bucharest, Romania | ‘Overcoming Barriers’ | pending |

Table 2. Core Objectives of the IASSS

1. Create a sustainable network that will promote the exchange of ideas and the pooling of resources between member student surgical societies.
2. Foster mutually beneficial and equitable connections and exchanges between surgical societies across the globe.
3. Create a thoughtful global platform for surgical electives.
4. Provide support for scholarly student-driven projects (clinical, research, education, advocacy) that may result in better patient care and solutions to global surgical issues.
5. Foster a better understanding of local and global issues impacting medical students with an interest in surgical specialties and create a sense of global fellowship.
6. Provide assistance to aspiring student surgical societies across the globe.

The ISS/SIC was founded in 1902 and is one of the oldest international surgical societies. The founding principle of the ISS, which echoes that of the IASSS, is the belief that the development of surgery throughout the world should be independent of politics and that science has no boundaries. The ISS/SIC envisioned the coming together of international surgeons as an opportunity to further research and ensure that the standard of clinical surgery is maintained at the highest level. The affiliation between the IASSS and the ISS/SIC provides students with both mentorship opportunities and exposure to current surgical knowledge and skills training. This collaboration has seen Professor Andrew Hill, incoming president of the ISS/SIC, and Dr Tina Gaarder accept the positions of IASSS patrons in 2017 to help guide the next generation of surgical pioneers. The IASSS supports the concept of “global surgery” and Dr John Meara, author of the Lancet Commission on Global Surgery⁵ is also a patron of the society.

The IASSS has linked with InciSioN - the International Student Surgical Network - a global network of medical students, residents and young doctors advocating education in and performing research in global surgery. It has also affiliated with regional student surgical bodies: the Southern African Students' Surgical Society (SASSS) and the Australasian Students' Surgical Association (ASSA).

The IASSS has partnered with two international companies to improve the educational resources offered to members. CSurgeries⁶ offers online peer-reviewed medical videos for

students and professionals across all surgical disciplines and Kenhub⁷ is a producer of online anatomy study resources that include video tutorials, anatomy quizzes, articles and an online interactive anatomy atlas.

Future Directions

In addition to driving its core objectives, the IASSS is establishing an elective programme to facilitate students travelling to other countries in order to gain surgical exposure and teaching from different perspectives.

The organising of international symposia has proven challenging for undergraduate medical students. From 2014 to 2017, committee members of the IASSS have managed these tasks in their spare time. The recent increased global interest in surgical education has meant that the size of these symposia has grown exponentially. Therefore, in 2018, the IASSS will be hosting regional conferences and in 2019 members will attend the ISS/SIC World Congress of Surgery.

The IASSS has gone from strength to strength since its beginnings in Southern Africa. Now an affiliate of the ISS/SIC, it is in a position to play an active role in international surgical education and training as well as provide global collaboration with the aim of nurturing future surgeons. This is especially important given the unmet and growing surgical needs of the world.

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