

# Heart Congress and Cardiac Surgery

November 27, 2021 | Webinar

## Cardiac surgery in developing countries: current perspectives in 21<sup>st</sup> century

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Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for 17.5 million deaths every year, 80% of which occur in low- and middle-income countries. Differently from industrialized countries, where cardiac surgery is seeing a significant revolution in the use of advanced technologies and in the type of referred patients (e.g. older age, end-stage heart failure); underdeveloped countries still show a significant gap between potentially operable patients and available medical, economical and human sources for practicing this specialty. For years, underserved countries have relied on international medical missions in local hospitals performed by teams coming from high specialized centers from U.S.A. and E.U. However, this approach has several limits: no continuity of care, no medical autonomy of local services, and no investment on local health structures. Consequently, in the last years many developing countries have consolidated self-sustaining surgical programs based on in-situ initiatives and resource allocation. With this presentation we aimed to revise current epidemiological trends on cardiac surgical programs in developing countries, analysing main referral diagnoses and surgical outcomes, and considering the economic impact of these programs. In particular we aim to show the Caribbean experience both in paediatric and adult cardiac surgery, highlighting the importance of raising awareness on favouring the rise of local programs. In fact, surgical departments relying on local health workers and based on 'hard work, perseverance, adaptability, and tolerance' principles can maintain excellent outcomes, with positive impact on economic costs and on underserved countries evolution.

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