CORRESPONDENCE

In reply: Clarifying surgery and anesthesia partnerships in response to global surgery and the World Health Organization

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To the Editor,

We welcome the comments from Drs Walter Johnson and Emmanuel Makasa¹ on our paper^{2,3} and thank them for their contributions, which serve to enrich and deepen the discourse in global surgery. They are correct in pointing out that the World Health Assembly Resolution 68.15 does not explicitly include the need to strengthen obstetrics or

emergency care and that there are 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) designed to promote global peace and prosperity. Nevertheless, they raise four additional issues that we want to clarify.

First, we suggested that efforts to strengthen global health systems through the provision of timely, safe, and affordable surgical care would help support the attainment of the triple billion goals. We did not intend to imply that this sentiment was expressed in the 13th General Programme of Work (GPW13). Nevertheless, it was precisely this overlap in vision between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the global surgery movement to which we drew special attention—the GPW13 is an opportunity to work towards the common goals of strengthening global health systems and promoting sustainable development. This was the chief advocacy argument of our paper.^{2,4}

Second, National Surgical, Obstetric, and Anesthesia Plans (NSOAPs) are one of numerous health system reform approaches to improve surgical care. We did not intend to imply that NSOAPs were the “only mechanism” to improve surgical systems or attain the SDGs. NSOAPs were highlighted as they provide a systematic, fully-costed, coordinated, and transparent policy approach¹ to improve surgical care in the developing context.⁵

Third, we stated that the GPW13 aimed at advancing the WHO's organizational vision (the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health) and SDG 3, as part of a much broader strategy to promote the attainment of all SDGs. We did not intend to exclude the other SDGs from the GPW13.

Finally, we did not intend to comment on either the past or present state of engagement between the WHO and its member states. Our goal was to emphasize the crucial importance of continued collaboration, to look for

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opportunities to improve and provide more effective engagement, and to strengthen data systems in rapidly changing health and data contexts.

We want to thank Drs Johnson and Makasa for their dedicated efforts to improve access to surgical care and specifically for their comments on our piece.

Conflicts of interest None declared.

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