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Response To: Letter to the Editor Regarding “Telemedicine-Guided Two-Incision Lower Leg Fasciotomy Performed by Combat Medics During Tactical Combat Casualty Care: A Feasibility Study”

P.W. Stark, MD^{1,2}; B.L.S. Borger van der Burg, MD, PhD²;
Surg. Lt-Col O.J.F. van Waes, MD PhD^{1,3}; MAJ T.T.C.F. van Dongen, MD, PhD^{2,3};
CPL 1 Wouter, MA³; SGT Marnalg Casper³; R. Hoencamp, MD, PhD^{1,2,3,4}

Dear Mr. Ryan C. Ross and COL Daniel J. Stinner,

We appreciate your commendation on our study and the insightful points raised in your letter. We would like to address these points as follows:

1. Realistic austere military environment testing: We are currently in the process of testing the application of Head-Mounted Displays (HMDs) in realistic austere military environments. These environments present several additional challenges, such as the lack of a stable Wi-Fi connection and a non-conventional operating room setup, often being situated outdoors in the field. This ongoing research aims to contribute further to the necessary steps for legislative development.
2. Connectivity solutions: Our team is also exploring various satellite connection setups and military connectivity options to ensure reliable telemedicine support. Due to operational safety reasons, we cannot provide detailed specifications of these connectivity options here. However, we assure you that robust and secure communication channels are a priority in our research.
3. Integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI): We share your vision of AI as a revolutionary tool for prolonged

field care. As you correctly stated, substantial research is needed to explore AI applications in broader medical, surgical, and prolonged field care domains.

We look forward to continued dialogue and collaboration in advancing the field of telemedicine and surgical support in austere environments. If there is potential for a mutually beneficial collaboration in this field, we would be interested in exploring this possibility further.

Sincerely, On behalf of all authors,
Pieter W. Stark, MD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Not applicable.

CLINICAL TRIAL REGISTRATION

Not applicable.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (HUMAN SUBJECTS)

A protocol for the underlying study was reviewed and approved by the Dutch Ministry of Defense and the Institutional Review Board of Alrijne Hospital, the Netherlands (NWMO 17-15, 17.409rt.tk).

INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL CARE AND USE COMMITTEE (IACUC)

Not applicable.

INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

P.S. prepared and wrote the reaction to: Letter to the Editor. B.B.B., O.W., T.D., W.C., and R.H. attributed to the concept version of this reaction. P.S., B.B.B., O.W., T.D., W.C., and R.H. contributed to the final version of the reaction.

INSTITUTIONAL CLEARANCE

Institutional clearance approved.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None declared.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of the underlying study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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The opinions or assertions contained herein are the private views of the authors and are not to be construed as official or reflecting the views of the Dutch DoD or Dutch government. Five authors are employees of the Dutch government.

Pieter W. Stark MD hereby declares, on behalf of all authors, that we agree to submit the Letter to the Editor along with our response.

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