

Surgery in the French Southern and Antarctic Territories (TAAF): assessment and perspectives of a specific teaching (2015-2022).

Martin HITIER

Résumé

French Southern and Antarctic Territories (TAAF) are the most remote and isolated territory of France. Beyond their exceptional historical and natural heritage, they host high-level scientific bases dedicated to research in a wide range of disciplines, such as oceanography, glaciology, meteorology, animal and plant biodiversity, or astronomy, whose results concern the entire planet and all its life forms. These scientific bases, permanently occupied, require not only a medical presence but also surgical skills, especially during the southern winter, which makes evacuation impossible. The conditions of surgical practice in the Southern Territories remain unique today, although they have points in common with war surgery or humanitarian surgery. With an operating room with the possibility of general anaesthesia and more and more efficient equipment, the doctors present on the austral bases are rarely surgeons by training and without access to scanner or MRI imaging.

After having carried out an on-board mission on "L'Astrolabe" as a ship's doctor and scientist (TAAF/French Polar Institute Paul-Émile Victor, rotation 2 Hobart-Australia/Dumont-Durville scientific base-Terre-Adélie), we have organized, since 2015, a practical surgery course intended for wintering doctors on the scientific bases of French Southern and Antarctic Territories (TAAF), of which it is instructive to assess: 1) pedagogical strategy developed to train practitioners working on these bases, 2) choice of surgical techniques taught and to be mastered, 3) learning possibilities during a surgical internship in a military hospital, 4) development of written and video teaching aids, 5) realization of a three-day practical surgery course in the Anatomy Laboratory of the Faculty of Medicine, 6) comparisons with the organization of other countries with a surgical activity in Antarctica, and 7) perspectives.

Key words: Pedagogy, Southern Territories, Antarctica