Abstract:
The lack of surgeons will be a future major problem in patient care for multifaceted reasons. Niche specialties such as OMFS face an additional drawback because of the need for dual qualification. Special surgical training that gives students the opportunity to gain experience in the techniques of plastic-reconstructive surgery (PRS) has therefore been established to promote interest in OMFS. Two hands-on courses with 8 modules of 2 h for 10 students were established. Course modules included surgical techniques of PRS, such as local flaps in a complex facial defect on pig heads, and were supervised by two OMFS surgeons. The identical initial and final tests examined theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Questionnaires concerning basic demographic data, future career goals, and perception of surgical disciplines before and after the completion of the course were handed out. The 19 participating students (12 female, 7 male; median age 24 ± 2.24) were in their 8.31 ± 1.20 semester. Results of the tests showed improvement in knowledge following the courses (before 52.68 ± 12.64 vs. after 77.89 ± 11.37; p 0.05). Perception of OMFS as a surgical discipline changed (3.68 ± 1.09 vs. 1.80 ± 0.64; p< 0.05). The following values also changed: students’ perception of PRS in OMFS (14 (74.68 %) vs. 5 (25.32 %); 19 (100 %) vs. 0 (0 %)), evaluation of PRS as a study subject for medical
students (7 (36.84 %) vs. 12 (63.16 %); 19 (100 %) vs. 0 (0 %)), and the interest in an OMFS elective subject (6 (31.58 %) vs. 13 (68.42 %); 18 (94.74 %) vs. 1 (5.26 %)) and as a final clinical year subject (4 (21.05 %) vs. 15 (78.95 %); 14 (73.68 %) vs. 5 (26.32 %)). Hands-on courses with complex facial defects can be used to gain new professionals, even in niche specialties such as OMFS. Moreover, a hands-on course design, including innovative teaching methods and structured objective tests combined with a close student-teacher relationship and motivated instructors, is able to promote complex surgical skills in PRS.