




Evaluation of user-interfaces for controlling movements of virtual minimally invasive surgical instruments

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Abstract

Background: Recent tele-mentoring technologies for minimally invasive surgery (MIS) augments the operative field with movements of virtual surgical instruments as visual cues. The objective of this work is to assess different user-interfaces that effectively transfer mentor's hand gestures to the movements of virtual surgical instruments.

Methods: A user study was conducted to assess three different user-interface devices (Oculus-Rift, SpaceMouse, Touch Haptic device) under various scenarios. The devices were integrated with a MIS tele-mentoring framework for control of both manual and robotic virtual surgical instruments.

Results: The user study revealed that Oculus Rift is preferred during robotic scenarios, whereas the touch haptic device is more suitable during manual scenarios for tele-mentoring.

Conclusion: A user-interface device in the form of a stylus controlled by fingers for pointing in 3D space is more suitable for manual MIS, whereas a user-interface that can be moved and oriented easily in 3D space by wrist motion is more suitable for robotic MIS.

KEYWORDS

minimally invasive surgery, surgical simulations, tele-mentoring, user-interfaces, virtual surgical instruments

1 | INTRODUCTION

Tele-medicine is playing an ever-increasing role in clinical practice with the aim to provide clinical healthcare from a distance.^{1,2} It entails the use of software/hardware technologies to share clinical information and edit its content in real-time. An aspect of tele-medicine, when applied to surgical context, includes tele-mentoring

and tele-collaboration during a surgery.³⁻⁵ Augmented reality based enabling technologies have been developed to facilitate tele-mentoring between an operating and a remote surgeon during a minimally invasive surgery (MIS). It involves the use of user interfaces that assist the mentor (the remote surgeon) to perform screen markings⁶⁻⁸ or display augmented hands gestures⁹⁻¹¹ to the mentee (the operating surgeon). More sophisticated user interfaces allow the

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mentor to transfer realistic visual cues in a form of the motion of virtual surgical instruments and has emerged as an effective mode of transferring information pertaining to tool-tissue interaction.¹²⁻¹⁵ The surgical instruments used for MIS are articulated in nature with multiple degrees-of-freedom and exhibit movement in three-dimensional (3D) space with constraints imposed by incision points.¹⁶ To control these virtual surgical instruments, high degrees-of-freedom (DOF) input devices are generally needed to accurately capture human hand movement from the real world and translate it to the movement of virtual surgical instruments overlaid onto the operative field. Thus, a suitable user-friendly input device is necessary to facilitate efficient acquisition of information that the mentor wants to convey to the mentee.

In a MIS tele-mentoring, the mentor demonstrates the required tool-tissue interaction to the mentee using virtual surgical instrument motions. The mentee mentally grasps these visual cues (augmented on the operative field) and performs the surgical sub-step as demonstrated by the mentor. The study performed by Shabir et al.¹⁷ shows that a path (projected on a two-dimensional operative field) defined by the mentor's virtual surgical instrument movement when compared to a predefined path varies with Dynamic Time Warping (DTW) distance of 1176.5 ± 331.8 . Dynamic Time Warping distance is a similarity measure between two paths¹⁸ and is used to assess the similarity between the paths defined by motions of surgical instruments.^{19,20} In the operating room, when the mentee replicates the motion of virtual instrument performed by the mentor, the average DTW distance further increases to 3195.3 ± 971.4 between the paths defined by the mentor's instrument movements and those of the mentee. Therefore, a selection of suitable of user interface is vital to reduce the prior error that may be induced in the tele-mentoring system by the mentor while manipulating virtual surgical instrument using the user interface. This will ensure that the information rendered to the mentee is accurate from the mentor's side.

Several previous works have been done to study and compare user interfaces for tele-robotic surgery and tele-mentoring scenarios during MIS.²¹⁻²³ These studies included quantification of human-machine interactions via user-interfaces for tele-robotic surgery,²¹ comparison of user interfaces of robotic surgical platforms based on degrees-of-freedom and force feedback,²² and perception and interpretation of the transmitted operating field video on different visualization interfaces for tele-mentoring.²³ Though, the notion of using a user interface to control virtual surgical instrument motion for tele-mentoring has been explored and demonstrated in both laparoscopic^{12,13,17,24} and robotic surgery,^{13-15,17} why a particular user interface was empirically chosen to use in previous tele-mentoring studies is not reasoned. Considering the variety of existing off-the-shelf user interface systems, it is a priority to compare, understand, and quantify the effectiveness, efficiency, and usability of such different user interfaces for tele-mentoring applications in MIS. Indeed, to best of our knowledge, no previous studies have evaluated and compared different user interfaces for tele-mentoring in MIS. In particular, to evaluate whether the user interfaces enable the mentor to demonstrate accurately and in timely manner the motion of the virtual surgical instrument along a path required for interacting with the tissue. Table 1 depict such different user-interfaces used in tele-mentoring systems for MIS.

It is imperative to understand and quantify the effectiveness and efficiency of various user-interfaces in different scenarios before incorporating them with a surgical tele-mentoring system. The objective of this work is to compare and evaluate user interface devices in terms of their efficiencies in controlling the motion of virtual surgical instruments during a minimally invasive surgical tele-mentoring scenario. Three standard off-the-shelf user interface devices are chosen, and an interfacing algorithm is developed to process the input from these interface devices and convert it to the motion of virtual laparoscopic as well as robotic surgical instruments augmented on the operative field. An experimental study is

TABLE 1 User interfaces used in minimally invasive surgical tele-mentoring

Study	Surgery type	User interface	Minimally invasive surgical tele-mentoring scenario
Lowry et al. ²⁴	Laparoscopic (manual)	Laparoscopic tool	HelpLightning system was used to segment laparoscopic tool from the view of a box trainer at mentor's site and overlaid onto the mentee view. The tele-mentoring was used for assessment of FLS skills.
Vera et al. ¹²	Laparoscopic (manual)	Laparoscopic tool	Similar to HelpLightning system, an augmented reality tele-mentoring (ART) platform was used for teaching intracorporeal suturing task.
Shabir et al. ^{13,17}	Laparoscopic (manual)	SpaceMouse	SpaceMouse was used to control the motion of laparoscopic instruments to assess the tele-mentoring between mentor and mentee.
Shabir et al. ^{13,17}	Robotic	Touch haptic device	Touch haptic device was used to control the motion of virtual robotic instruments to assess the tele-mentoring between mentor and mentee.
Jarc et al. ¹⁴	Robotic	Razer™ hydra - sixense	Razer hydra user interface was used to control motion of 3D virtual model of da vinci Endowrist® large needle driver for dry-lab tasks that targeted basic technical skills.
Jarc et al. ¹⁵	Robotic	Custom interface	A custom interface resembling da vinci hand controller was used to control virtual model of Endowrist® instruments for tissue dissection and suturing in a live porcine model

conducted to evaluate the user interface devices for effectively transferring the mentor's hand gestures to the movements of virtual surgical instruments required in tele-mentoring.

2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

To evaluate the user interfaces for surgical tele-mentoring during a MIS, a tele-mentoring framework proposed by Shabir et al.^{13,17} was used for the experiments in our study. The setup at the mentee's site (representing the operating room) captures the position of the incision points, the orientation and position of the scope, and the video feed acquired from the scope camera (representing the view of the operating field). This information is transferred over a network from the mentee's site to the mentor's site and is rendered on a visualization screen. Virtual surgical instruments are overlaid onto the view of the operating field (acquired from the scope) such that it appears as if the instruments are inserted through the incision points. The movements of virtual surgical instruments are controlled by the user interfaces. Three different user interface devices were chosen and integrated with the setup at the mentor's site. The interfaces are described in subsection I. The interfacing algorithm developed for rendering the motion of a virtual surgical instrument, which is controlled by the interfaces, is presented in subsection II. Finally, the details of the user study are explained in subsection III.

2.1 | Interface devices used in the study

Three interfaces were used in the study (as shown in Figure 1): (a) Oculus Rift – Meta (formerly Facebook), (b) SpaceMouse – 3Dconnexion, and (c) Touch Haptic Device – 3D Systems. The three devices were chosen as they provide 6 DOFs inputs (three translations and three rotations) and can be purchased off-the-shelf. In the study, simulation of the virtual robotic surgical instrument requires 6 DOFs input, whereas the virtual laparoscopic surgical instrument required only 4 DOFs input. Compared to the SpaceMouse, both the Oculus Rift (a lightweight hand controller that moves in 3D space) and the Touch Haptic Device (in form of a hand-held stylus that moves in 3D space) require calibration. A clutch system was implemented for

Oculus Rift and Touch Haptic interfaces. As the interfaces provide absolute poses (i.e. positions and orientations), the clutch system enables ergonomic repositioning of the styluses (or controllers) of the user-interfaces. The SpaceMouse interface provides incremental poses, and as a result no calibration is required; neither a clutch system was implemented during the study. The mapping of the laparoscopic and robotic tooltip motion with the motion of the interface's stylus is presented in Figure 2. From a cost perspective, the SpaceMouse and Oculus Rift cost less (in range of \$300–\$700) as compared to the Touch Haptic Device (over \$1000). The higher cost of Touch Haptic Device is due to the motors used for rendering feedback forces in the virtual environment. In the study, no feedback forces were rendered using the Touch Haptic Device.

2.2 | Interfacing algorithm

The following Algorithm 1 *RenderInstrument* describes the rendering of the overlaid virtual surgical instrument motion controlled by the user interface device, during our experiments.

Algorithm 1 *RenderInstrument* renders the motion of a virtual surgical instrument controlled by the interface

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Input: toolType, interfaceType,  $M_{World}^{Scope}(t)$ ,  $M_{Scope}^{Interface}$ ,
 $X_{Incision}$ 
1: Set  $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t)$  in front of scope camera
   frame  $M_{World}^{Scope}(t)$ ,
2:  $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t_0) \leftarrow M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t)$ 
3: if (interfaceType doesn't uses clutch)
4:    $M_{Interface}^{Stylus}(t_0) \leftarrow M_{Identity}$ 
5:    $\emptyset(t_0) \leftarrow 0$ 
6: end if
7: while (augmentationRequired) do
8:   Get  $M_{Interface}^{Stylus}(t)$ ,  $\emptyset(t)$ , and clutch state from the
   interface
9:   if (interfaceType uses clutch and clutch is
   turned ON from OFF state)
10:     $M_{Interface}^{Stylus}(t_0) \leftarrow M_{Interface}^{Stylus}(t)$ 

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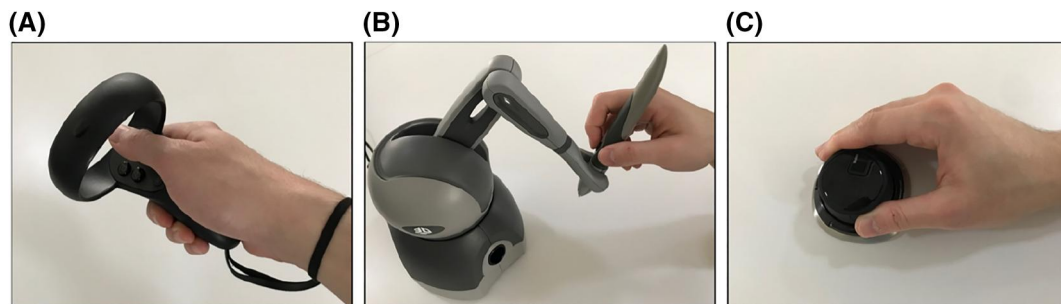


FIGURE 1 User interface devices used in the study: (A) Oculus Rift – Meta (formerly Facebook), (B) Touch Haptic Device – 3D Systems, and (C) SpaceMouse – 3Dconnexion

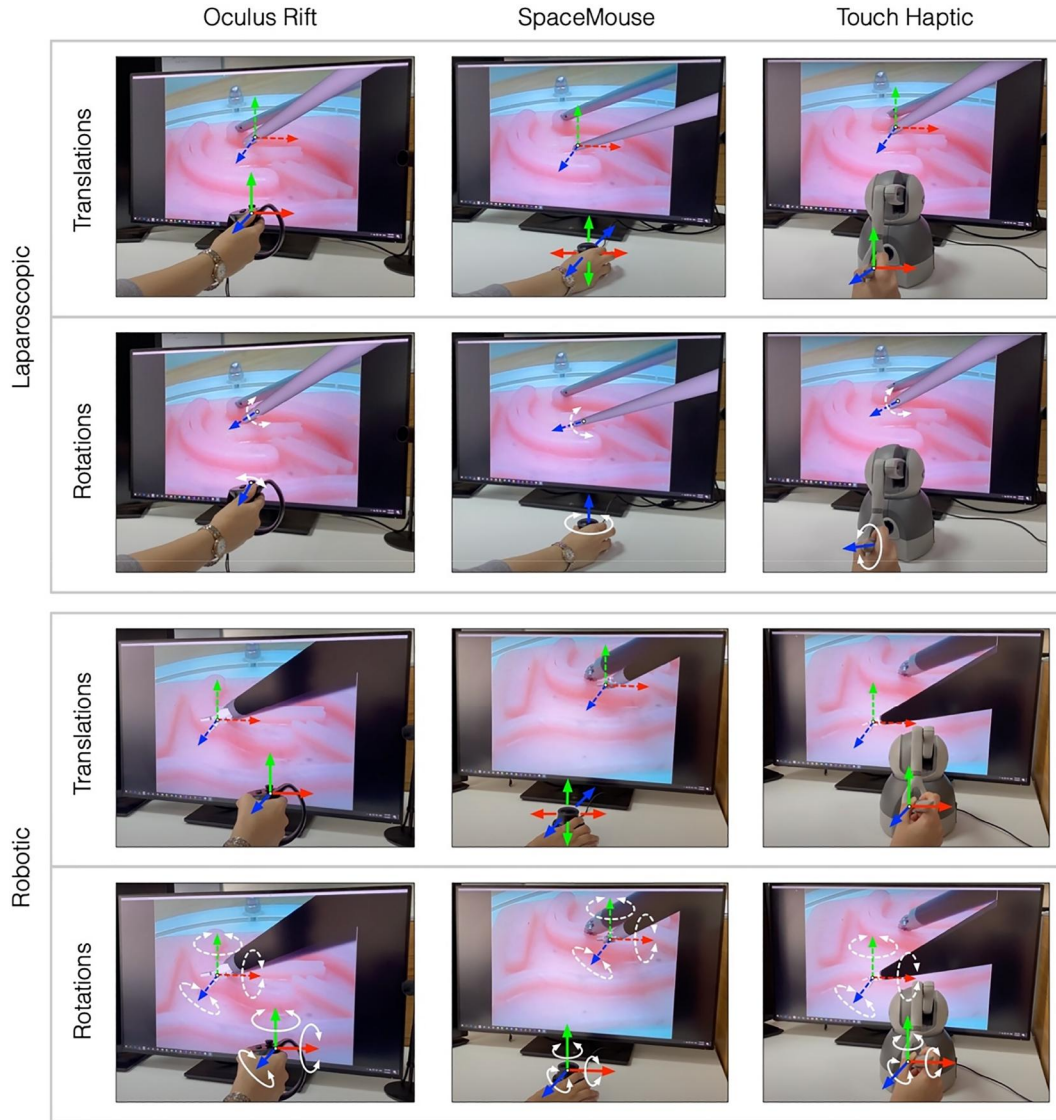


FIGURE 2 Mapping of the rotations and translations for the virtual laparoscopic and robotic tooltip motion with the motion performed by the stylus of the interfaces. Three interfaces were used, namely Oculus Rift, SpaceMouse, and Touch Haptic device. The mapping for robotic tooltips involved 3 degrees-of-freedom for translation and 3 degrees-of-freedom for rotation. The mapping for laparoscopic tooltip involved 3 degrees-of-freedom for translation and 1 degrees-of-freedom for rotation. Both real surgical instrument controlled by mentee and virtual surgical instrument controlled by mentor can be seen in the operative field

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11:  $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t_0) \leftarrow M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t)$ 
12:  $\emptyset(t_0) \leftarrow \emptyset(t)$ 
13: end if
14: if (interfaceType uses clutch and clutch is in ON
state) or (interfaceType doesn't uses clutch)
15:  $M_{World}^{Stylus}(t) \leftarrow M_{World}^{Scope}(t) \cdot M_{Scope}^{Interface} \cdot M_{Interface}^{Stylus}(t)$ 
16:  $M_{World}^{Stylus}(t_0) \leftarrow M_{World}^{Scope}(t) \cdot M_{Scope}^{Interface} \cdot M_{Interface}^{Stylus}(t_0)$ 
17: Compute  $\delta_{Translation}(t)$  between frames  $M_{World}^{Stylus}(t)$ 
and  $M_{World}^{Stylus}(t_0)$ 
18: if (toolType is robotic)
19: Compute  $\delta_{Rotation}(t)$  between frames  $M_{World}^{Stylus}(t)$ 
and  $M_{World}^{Stylus}(t_0)$ 
20: Compute  $M_5(t)$  from  $\delta_{Rotation}(t)$  and
 $\delta_{Translation}(t)$ 
21:  $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t) \leftarrow M_5(t)M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t_0)$ 
22: end if
23: if (toolType is laparoscopic)
24: Compute  $M_5(t)$  from  $\delta_{Translation}(t)$ 
25:  $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t) \leftarrow M_5(t)M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t_0)$ 
26:  $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t) \leftarrow \text{reorient}(M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t),$ 
 $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t_0), x_{Incision}, \emptyset(t), \emptyset(t_0))$ 
27: end if
28: end if
29: if (interfaceType doesn't uses clutch)
30:  $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t_0) \leftarrow M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t)$ 
31: end if
32: Compute DoFs based on tooltype,  $x_{Incision}$ , and
 $M_{World}^{EndEffector}(t)$ 

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33: Apply *DoFs* to render the *tooltype*

34: **end while**

The above algorithm *RenderInstrument* renders the motion of a virtual surgical instrument overlaid onto the operative field. The inputs of this algorithm include: *tooltype* (which can be a robotic or laparoscopic), *interfaceType* (to detect whether it uses clutch), the incision point $x_{\text{Incision}}(t)$, $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{Scope}}(t)$ frame representing the pose of the surgical scope camera with respect to the world (Figure 3A), and $M_{\text{Scope}}^{\text{Interface}}(t)$ frame representing the mapping of the interface workspace with respect to scope. The pose of the stylus within the interface workspace is represented by frame $M_{\text{Interface}}^{\text{Stylus}}(t)$. The interface controls the pose of an end effector frame $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$, which represents the pose of the tooltip (Figure 3B). Clutch is used to ergonomically reposition the stylus of the interface. When the clutch is in the OFF state, the operator can reposition the stylus without moving the virtual instrument. When the clutch is turned ON from the OFF state, the stylus frame $M_{\text{Interface}}^{\text{Stylus}}(t_0)$, rotation angle $\varphi(t_0)$ (in the case of laparoscopic instrument), and current end effector frame $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t_0)$ are recorded. Any subsequent relative movement of the stylus represented by $M_{\text{Interface}}(t)$ is computed and applied to the end effector frame $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t_0)$ to obtain the current end effector frame $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$.

The end effector frame $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$ is reoriented for laparoscopic instrument type. This is to ensure the constraints imposed by a

limited degree-of-freedom laparoscopic instrument are included while computing $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$. The $x_{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$ is set to the origin of $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$ frame and $\mu(t_0)$ to the Z-Axis of $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$ frame. A new frame is computed with $x_{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$ as the origin and axes reoriented. The X-Axis is set to $(x_{\text{EndEffector}}(t) - x_{\text{Incision}}(t))$. The Y-Axis is computed as the cross product of $\mu(t_0)$ and $(x_{\text{EndEffector}}(t) - x_{\text{Incision}}(t))$. The Y axis is then rotated along $(x_{\text{EndEffector}}(t) - x_{\text{Incision}}(t))$ by an angle $\varphi(t) - \varphi(t_0)$. The Z axis is set to be orthogonal to both X and Y axes.

Algorithm 1 computes the degrees-of-freedom required for rendering the virtual surgical instrument. In the case of robotic instrument type, a four degree-of-freedom surgical instrument is used with each DOF represented by joint angles θ_1 , θ_2 , θ_3 , and θ_4 (Figure 3C) and positions of each joint represented by vectors x_1 , x_2 and x_3 (Figure 3D). The x_3 and x_0 are set to $x_{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$ and $x_{\text{Incision}}(t)$. A frame is defined with the origin x_3 , X-axis n_x coincides with the X-axis of $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$, the Z-axis n_z is orthogonal to both n_x and vector $x_3 - x_0$, and Y-axis n_y is orthogonal to both n_x and n_z . x_2 is computed as $x_3 + \lambda_{23} n_y$, where λ_{23} denotes the distance between x_2 and x_3 . x_1 is computed as $x_2 + \lambda_{12}(x_0 - x_2) / \|(x_0 - x_2)\|$, where λ_{12} denotes the distance between x_1 and x_2 . θ_2 is computed as the angle substituted by vectors $(x_3 - x_2)$ with $(x_2 - x_1)$. A unit vector $n_{\text{Orthogonal}}$ is defined orthogonal to both $x_0 - x_2$ and n_{UpVector} . θ_1 is computed as the angle substituted by vectors $n_z \times (x_0 - x_2)$ with $n_{\text{Orthogonal}}$. θ_3 is computed as the angle substituted between n_z and Z-axis of $M_{\text{World}}^{\text{EndEffector}}(t)$. θ_4 corresponds to the opening and closing of the

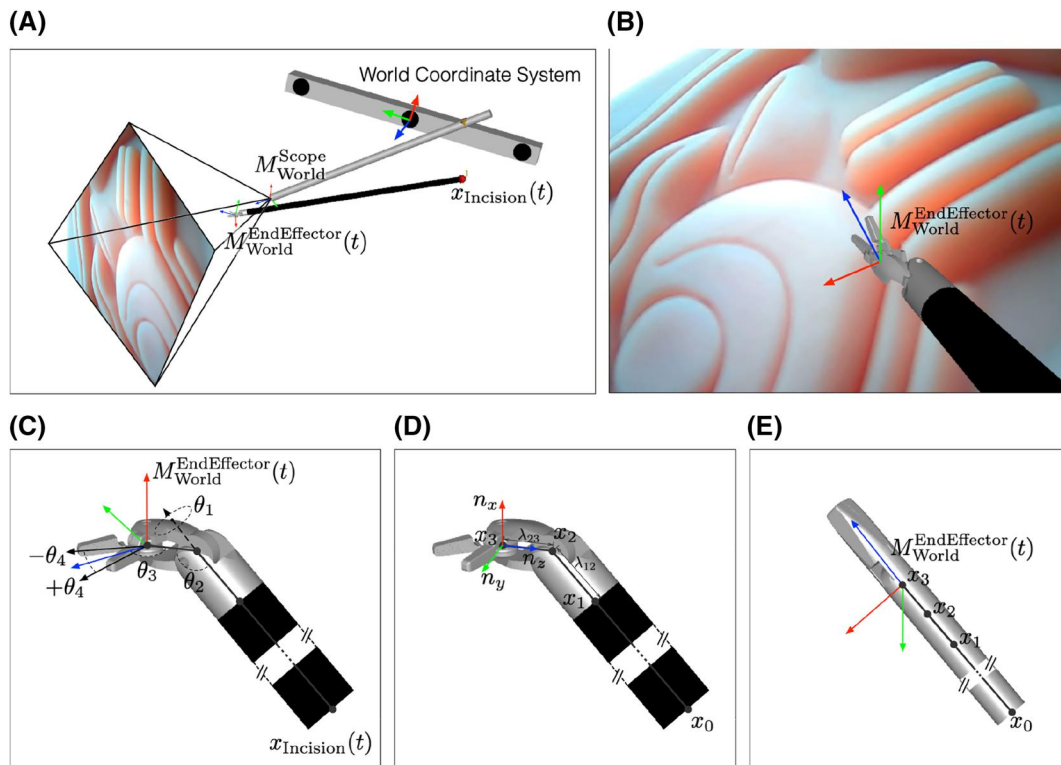


FIGURE 3 (A) Augmented reality environment, (B) end effector frame representing the pose of the tooltip, (C) joint angles for each degree-of-freedom for robotic tool, (D) positions of each joints for robotic tool, (E) positions of each joints for laparoscopic tool

tooltips contributing to the pinching mechanism, and the tooltips are rendered at $\theta_3 + \theta_4$ and $\theta_3 - \theta_4$. In the case of laparoscopic instrument type, a two degree-of-freedom surgical instrument (Figure 3E) is used. It is considered as a special case of four degree-of-freedom robotic instrument type, where θ_3 and θ_2 are constant (180°).

2.3 | Setup for the user study

Six participants (right-handed with the ages from 26 to 35 years old) from the Department of Surgery at Hamad General Hospital, Doha, Qatar participated in the user study. The participants are researchers (non-surgeons) with expertise in developing surgical technologies and have previously experienced virtual and mixed reality environments. The study was approved by the institutional review board comprising of the ethical committee (Medical Research Centre, Doha, Qatar, approval number MRC-01-20-087). The inclusion criteria were set to include participants who have previous experience in manoeuvring laparoscopic and robotic (da Vinci Xi – Intuitive surgical Inc.) surgical instruments. Before the study, the participants went through a 10–15 min preparatory session to get familiar with the

controls of the three user interfaces for maneuvering the virtual surgical instruments. The preparatory session was completed for each participant after the participant was able to map the input from the user interfaces to the translation and rotation motion of the virtual surgical instruments (as depicted in Figure 2). The participants then took part in simulated scenarios as mentors. The scenarios involved assessing the motion of virtual laparoscopic and robotic surgical instruments along a path using the user interfaces (Figure 4A).

For the study, four surgical scenarios, namely A, B, C, and D, were simulated. The details of each scenario are presented in Table 2. Laparoscopic tooltips have fewer degrees-of-freedom as compared to robotic tooltips, resulting in limited articulation. This constraint was taken into consideration while designing the scenarios. The scenarios A, B, and C were designed to enable comparison of the interfaces for both the laparoscopic and robotic tooltips. In each of the simulated scenarios A, B, and C, the participants performed three trials. The order of usage of the three user interfaces in our study was randomized for each participant (using a simple randomisation²⁵). Once a particular user interface was selected, the combination of tool-type (laparoscopic or robotic) and scenario (A, B, or C) were also randomized for the trials. Robotic tools with a higher articulation enable the participants to orient the tooltips. To evaluate the interfaces for this particular feature, scenario D was designed. In the case of scenario D (Figure 4B), only one trial was conducted. The factorial aspect of the experiment led to 57 trials for each participant. The priority was to increase the robustness of estimations by having three trials per subject for each scenario. Though it limited the total number of participants to only six, it gave a more robust estimation of performance measures.

During the study, the input provided by the participants via the user interfaces for maneuvering the virtual surgical tooltips were recorded. The recorded input and the corresponding motion of the overlaid virtual tooltips were processed to extract meaningful indices

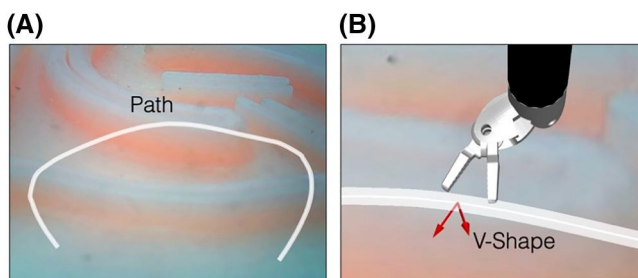


FIGURE 4 (A) Path rendered in Scenario A, B, and C (B) V-Shape rendered in Scenario D

TABLE 2 Surgical scenarios simulated in the user study

Simulated scenario	Tool types used	Participant's hand controlling the interface	Task performed by the participant in the scenario
Scenario A	Laparoscopic (manual) and robotic	Only right hand was used	Participant was asked to move the virtual surgical instrument along a path using right hand (Figure 4A). The task measured the ease of using the interface with right hand.
Scenario B	Laparoscopic (manual) and robotic	Only left hand was used	Participant was asked to move the virtual surgical instrument along a path using left hand. The task measured the ease of using the interface with left hand.
Scenario C	Laparoscopic (manual) and robotic	Both left and right hand were used concurrently	Participant was asked to move two virtual surgical instruments together along a path using both left and right hand. The task measured the ease of using the interface for dexterous maneuvering of the virtual surgical instruments using both hands.
Scenario D	Robotic	Both left and right hand were used consecutively	Participant was asked to orient a virtual surgical instrument (by matching it to a rendered V-shape as shown in Figure 4B) along a path while traversing. The tool was first traversed in a direction using right hand and then traversed back in the opposite direction using left hand.



(presented in Table 3) for measuring the performance. *T*-tests were used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of the recorded indices among different scenarios. The *t*-tests were selected as the collected data are continuous random variables (for both duration and distance metrics). Furthermore, the assumptions (over the normality and homogeneity of variance) regarding the *t*-tests were carefully examined and validated.

3 | RESULTS

Figures 5 and 6 compare the average durations to complete the task for scenarios A (right hand only), B (left hand only), and C (using both hands), using the three different user interfaces. In the case of laparoscopic surgical instruments (Figure 5), if the mentor needs to demonstrate the motion of a single virtual surgical instrument using either the right or the left hand only (i.e., in scenario A or B), all the three user interfaces take the same duration. However, when the mentor needs to demonstrate tool-tissue interaction using both hands (scenario C), the SpaceMouse takes significantly more time (42 ± 16 s), compared to Oculus Rift (31 ± 8 s, $p = 0.009$) and Touch Haptic device (31 ± 16 s, $p = 0.03$). In the case of robotic surgical instruments (Figure 6), the SpaceMouse requires more time to complete the task, compared to Oculus Rift and Touch Haptic device in all the three scenarios A, B, and C. Furthermore, for robotic surgical instruments in scenario C, the Touch Haptic device takes less time (23 ± 8 s, $p < 0.02$), compared to the time taken by Oculus Rift (33 ± 11 s).

Figures 5 and 6 also compare the average distances maintained by the tooltip during the tasks. For laparoscopic surgical instruments in scenario A (Figure 5), using the three interfaces is equivalent to traversing the path. However, in the case of scenario B, the

SpaceMouse deviates further (11.65 ± 6.99 mm) as compared to both Oculus Rift (5.50 ± 1.23 mm, $p = 0.0004$) and Touch Haptic device (5.36 ± 0.89 mm, $p = 0.0003$). Also, in the scenario C, the SpaceMouse deviates more (12.08 ± 3.80 mm) than both Oculus Rift (10.04 ± 4.10 mm, $p = 0.05$) and Touch Haptic device (11.04 ± 5.01 mm, $p = 0.06$). This shows SpaceMouse is effective in tele-mentoring when a single virtual instrument motion needs to be displayed and the motion is controlled by the mentor's dominant hand (which is the right-hand in the case of this study). In the case of robotic surgical instruments (Figure 6), the participants were able to traverse the path with a better accuracy (smaller deviations) using Oculus Rift, compared to other two interfaces in all the three scenarios.

In Figure 7, the participants performed better using Oculus Rift for the movements of robotic virtual surgical instruments, compared to their manual counterpart. Though it takes similar time to complete the task, the average distance maintained by the tooltip from the path during the task is smaller for robotic virtual surgical instruments than the manual counterpart in all the three scenarios A, B, and C. In the case of Touch Haptic device, no significant difference was found between manipulating robotic or manual virtual surgical instruments. In the case of SpaceMouse, the participants performed better for the movements of manual virtual surgical instruments than for those of robotic virtual surgical instruments. It takes shorter time (in scenario A and B) as well as the virtual instrument tooltip deviates less from the path (in all the three scenarios).

During a minimally invasive surgical tele-mentoring sub-step, the mentor needs to demonstrate to the mentee a series of tooltip movements over a period. During these movements (such as suturing or cauterisation) the tooltip of the virtual surgical instrument should stay on a pre-defined path with respect to the nearby tissues. To compare the user interfaces on this aspect, distribution of

TABLE 3 Indices used to compare performance of user interfaces during the user study

Indices	Description	Used in scenario			
		A	B	C	D
Total duration	The total time taken by a participant to complete the task.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Average distance	Average distance maintained by the tool from the path, that is, summation of distance of the tooltip from the curve with respect to time divided by the total time to complete the task $d_{\text{Average}} = \frac{\sum \Delta t_i d_i}{\sum \Delta t_i}$ Where Δt_i is the change in time for a given instance i and d_i is the Euclidian distance between the tooltip and the point on the path closest to the tooltip's position.	✓	✓	✓	
Percentage of time spent in a bin	Four bins with incremental size were defined (0–5, 5–10, 10–15, 15<). Each bin represents a range of distance maintained by the tooltip of the virtual surgical instrument from the path. The time spent in a bin corresponds to the time spent by the tooltip within the range of distance defined for the bin. The summation of the individual times in each bin gives the total duration. The percentage of the time spent in a bin is equal to the time spent in a bin with respect to the total duration.	✓	✓	✓	
Orientation time	Time required to orient the tooltip to match the rendered V-Shape. The next V-shape along the path is rendered only when the user properly orients the virtual tooltip for the current V-shape.				✓

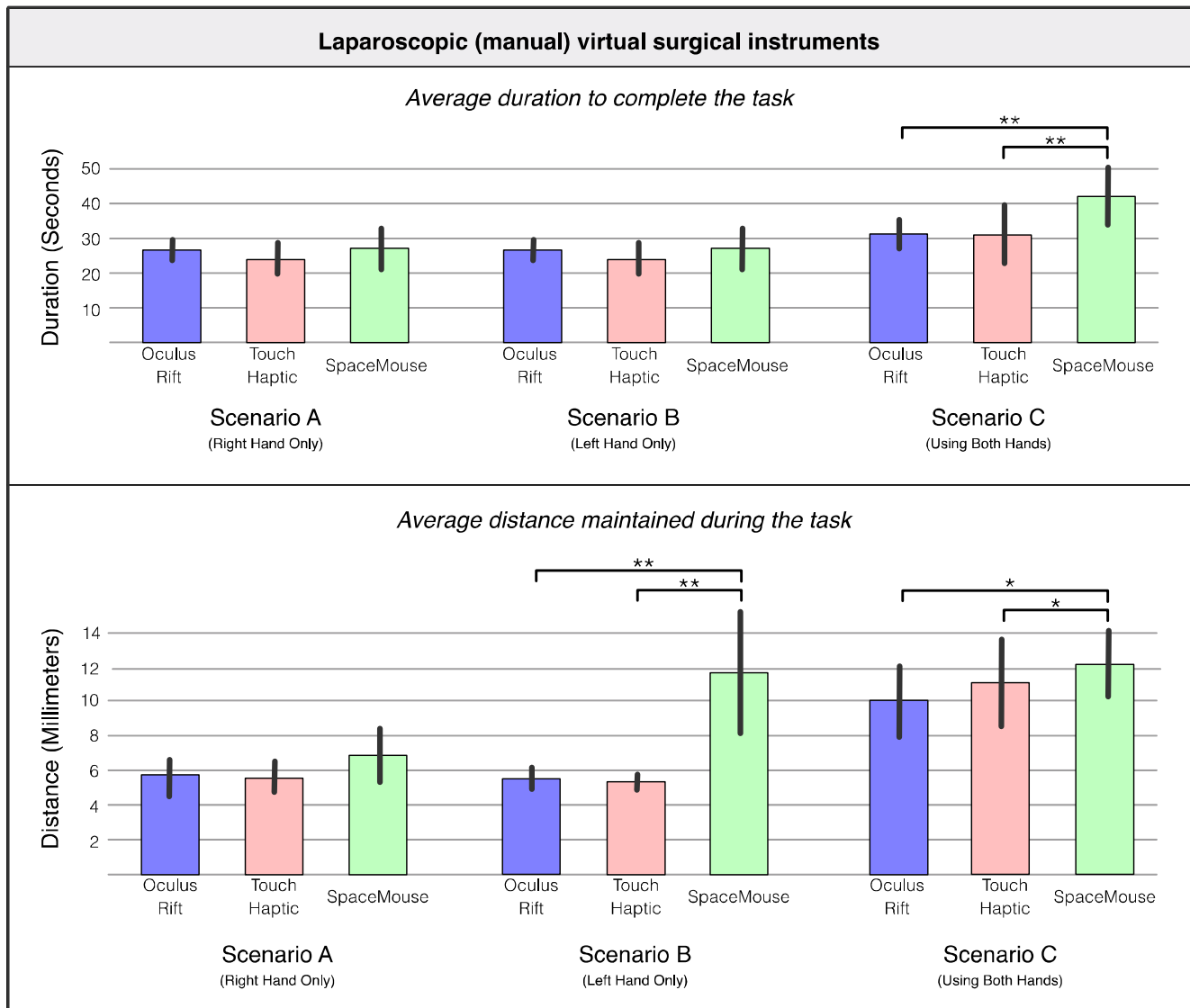


FIGURE 5 The average duration to complete the task and the average distance maintained by the tooltip during the task using the three user-interfaces for scenario A (right hand only), B (left hand only), and C (using both hands) in case of laparoscopic (manual) virtual surgical instruments. The comparison is tagged based on the p -value using a star-type categorisation: if p -value ≤ 0.05 then “***”, if $0.05 < p$ -value ≤ 0.1 then “*”, and if $0.1 < p$ -value, then ”

the percentages of time spent in a bin was used. While the aforementioned results presented in Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7 compare the user interfaces on the basis of two metrics (the average duration to complete the task and the average distance maintained by the tooltip from the path during the task), Figure 8 combines the two metrics into one. It illustrates a comparison of the percentages of time spent in the four bins (with sizes varying from 0 to 5 mm, 5–10 mm, 10–15 mm, and greater than 15 mm) by the virtual surgical instrument’s tooltip controlled via different user interfaces across scenarios A, B, and C during the task. Similar to a histogram, the distribution of the time percentages spent in a bin (Table 3) facilitates to analyse and compare the proximity of the tooltip from the path during the task. Greater percentage of time is spent in lower distance bins (such as 0–5 mm), the closer the tooltip

movement to the predefined path during the task. In the case of laparoscopic (manual) surgical instruments, Touch Haptic device takes precedence over SpaceMouse in terms of maintaining a higher accuracy as a user interface for the mentor. No significant difference was found between Touch Haptic device and Oculus Rift. In contrast, for robotic surgical instruments, Oculus Rift showed a higher accuracy for a larger percentage of duration, compared to both Touch Haptic device and SpaceMouse. Another interesting pattern, which can be observed in Figure 8, is that Oculus Rift performs similarly in both scenarios A (right hand is only used) and B (left hand is only used). One reasonable explanation could be that the control of the virtual surgical instruments in the case of Oculus Rift is performed by wrist motion rather than finger movements (as in the case of both Touch Haptic device and SpaceMouse).

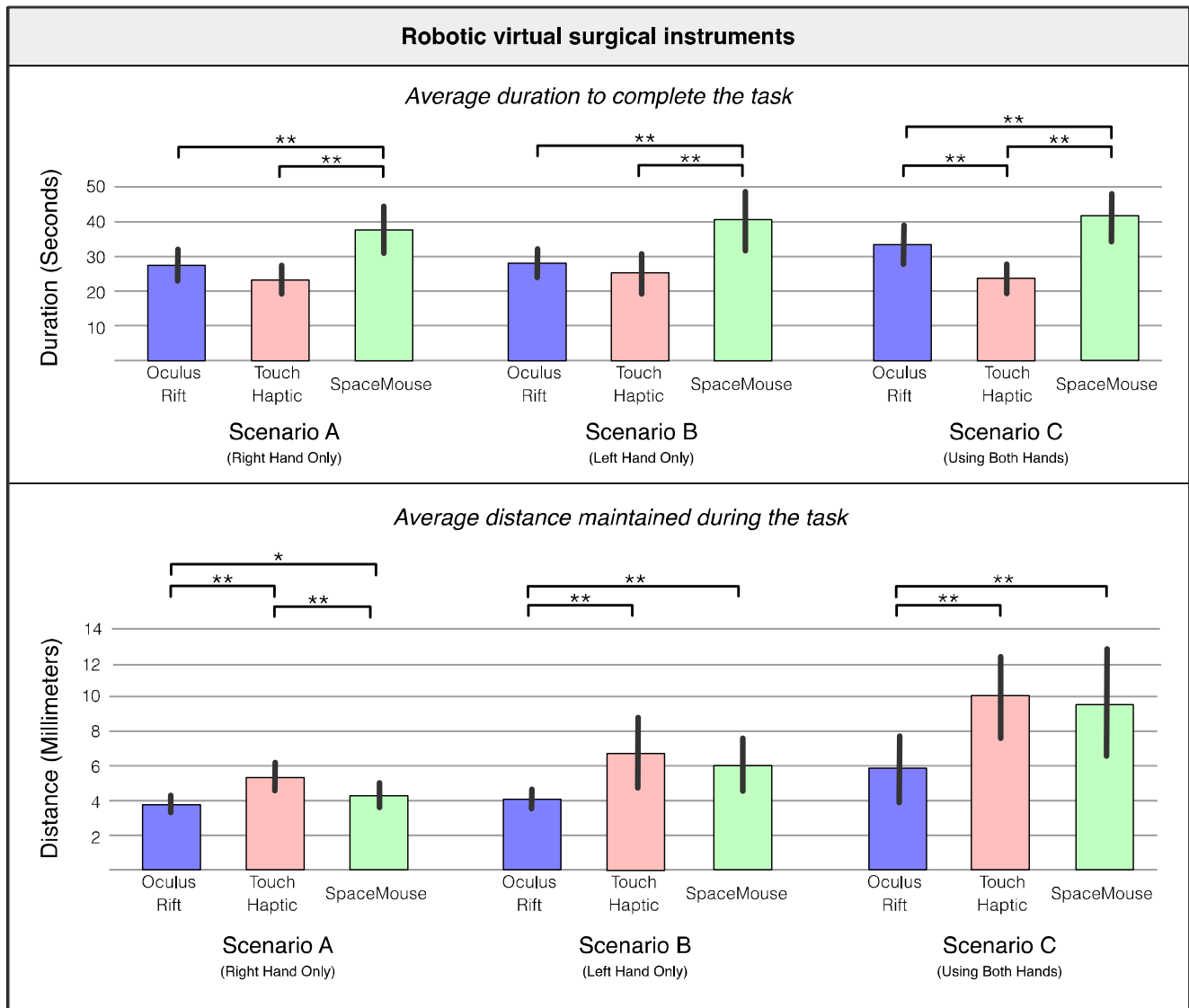


FIGURE 6 The average duration to complete the task and the average distance maintained by the tooltip during the task using the three user-interfaces for scenario A (right hand only), B (left hand only), and C (using both hands) in case of robotic virtual surgical instruments. The comparison is tagged based on the p -value using a star-type categorisation: if p -value ≤ 0.05 then “***”, if $0.05 < p$ -value ≤ 0.1 then “**”, and if $0.1 < p$ -value, then “*

Figure 9 shows the time required to orient the tooltip of a robotic surgical instrument to match the rendered V-shape. We observe that Oculus Rift takes less time as compared to SpaceMouse while traversing the path left to right and vice versa.

4 | DISCUSSION

In summary, during a tele-mentoring for minimally invasive robotic surgical applications, when both the mentor and the mentee have comparable surgical macro-skills (such as maneuvering of surgical instruments, general expertise in anatomy, ability to distinguish surrounding anatomical structures, and assess tissue thickness¹⁷), the Touch Haptic Device is more suitable to demonstrate the motion of

virtual surgical instrument overlaid onto the surgical field. The Touch Haptic Device assists the mentor to traverse a pre-defined path faster (especially for scenarios A and C with robotic tooltips). However, when the mentee has not perfected the surgically relevant micro-skills (such as economy of movement, visual tactility, and tool-tissue interaction^{26,27}), more accurate virtual surgical instrument motion needs to be depicted. In such a case, Oculus Rift as a user interface device is more preferred as it assists the mentor to traverse a pre-defined path with lesser deviation (as observed in all the three scenarios for robotic tooltips).

On the other hand, for tele-mentoring of minimally invasive laparoscopic (manual) surgery, uses of the Touch Haptic Device and Oculus Rift are approximately equivalent for maneuvering the virtual surgical instruments. A laparoscopic virtual surgical instrument uses

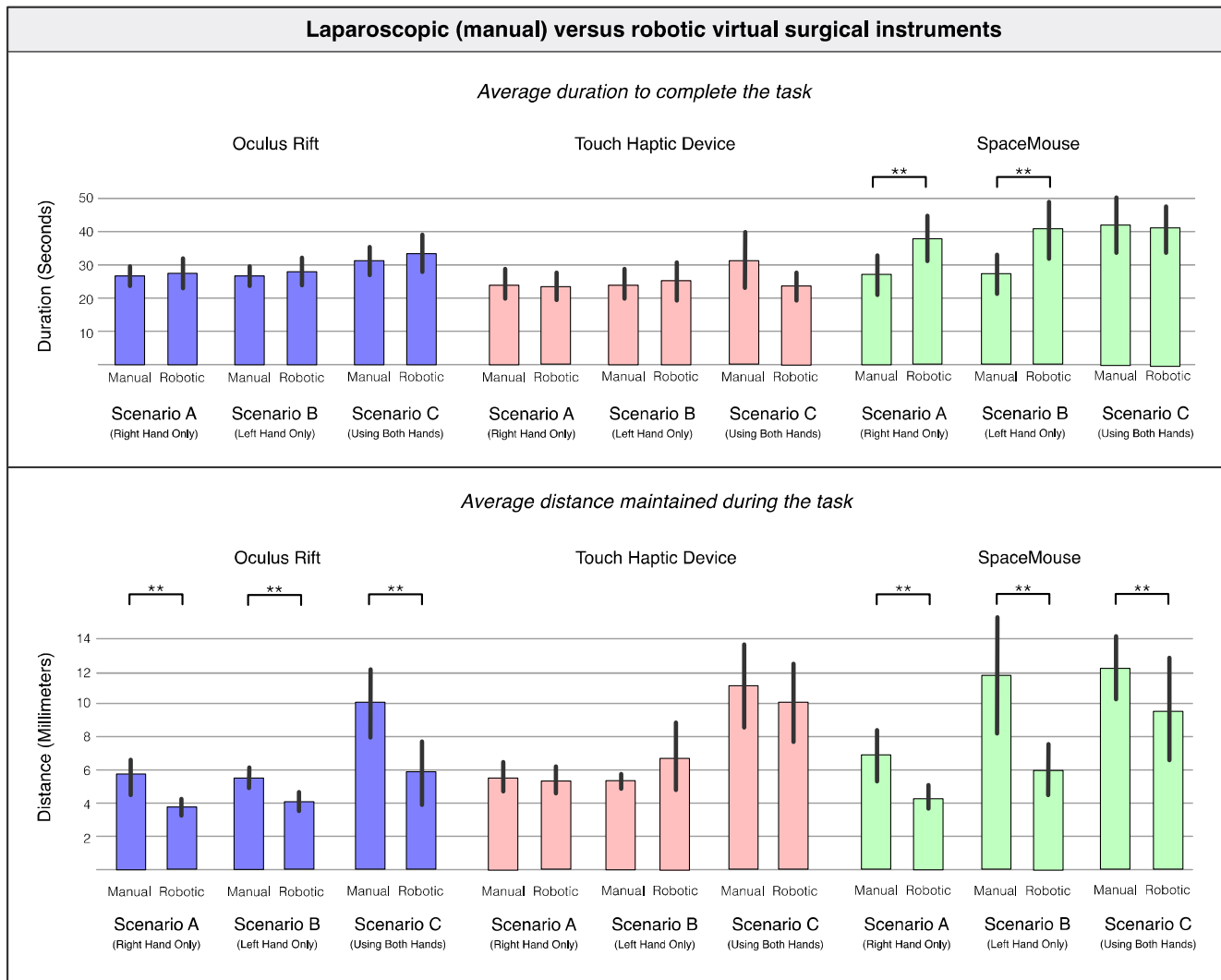


FIGURE 7 Comparison of the average duration to complete the task and the average distance maintained by the tooltip during the task for manual and robotic virtual surgical instruments. The comparison is tagged based on the p -value using a star-type categorisation: if p -value ≤ 0.05 then “***”, if $0.05 < p$ -value ≤ 0.1 then “**”, and if $0.1 < p$ -value, then “*”

4 DOFs input: 3 for translations and 1 for rotation. Translating the tooltip is sufficient to position the entire virtual laparoscopic surgical instrument with respect to the operative field during a tele-mentoring task and is easily doable using Touch Haptic Device and Oculus Rift. Due to this, both the devices performed equivalently across the three scenarios. The rotation of the virtual laparoscopic surgical instrument along its shaft assists the mentor to demonstrate the orientation of the tooltip for surgical tasks, such as cutting, cauterisation, or grasping. For the mentee, the information can be perceived by analysing the pose of the virtual instrument with respect to the tissue being operated. In such cases, a user interface that facilitates translations of the tooltip in the 3D space is sufficient for laparoscopic (manual) tele-mentoring.

A minimally invasive tele-mentoring system may be used for both laparoscopic as well as robotic surgery.^{13,17} In such a case, the Touch Haptic Device may be suitable as it performs equivalently for both types of surgery. The choice of the user interface for tele-mentoring

may also depend upon other aspects, such as cost and size. The mentor may be present at a site where a proper MIS tele-mentoring hardware is not installed. In such a case, a portable user-interface could be connected to a laptop with an Internet connection as a remote tele-mentoring setup. Though the Touch Haptic device is a suitable user interface device for both laparoscopic and robotic surgical instrument manipulation, the cost and size may be limiting factors for its usage at the mentor site. On similar grounds, though the Oculus Rift which satisfies both aspects of low cost and portability, it requires calibration and may be tedious to set up at the mentor's site. Therefore, in scenarios where all the three user interface devices perform similarly, SpaceMouse can be a preferred choice due to its low cost and compact portable size (for example, in Scenario A of laparoscopic virtual surgical instrument control).

While the user study was tailored to assess the user interfaces for MIS tele-mentoring scenarios, future work would be geared towards assessing the user interfaces on three broader directions. The first

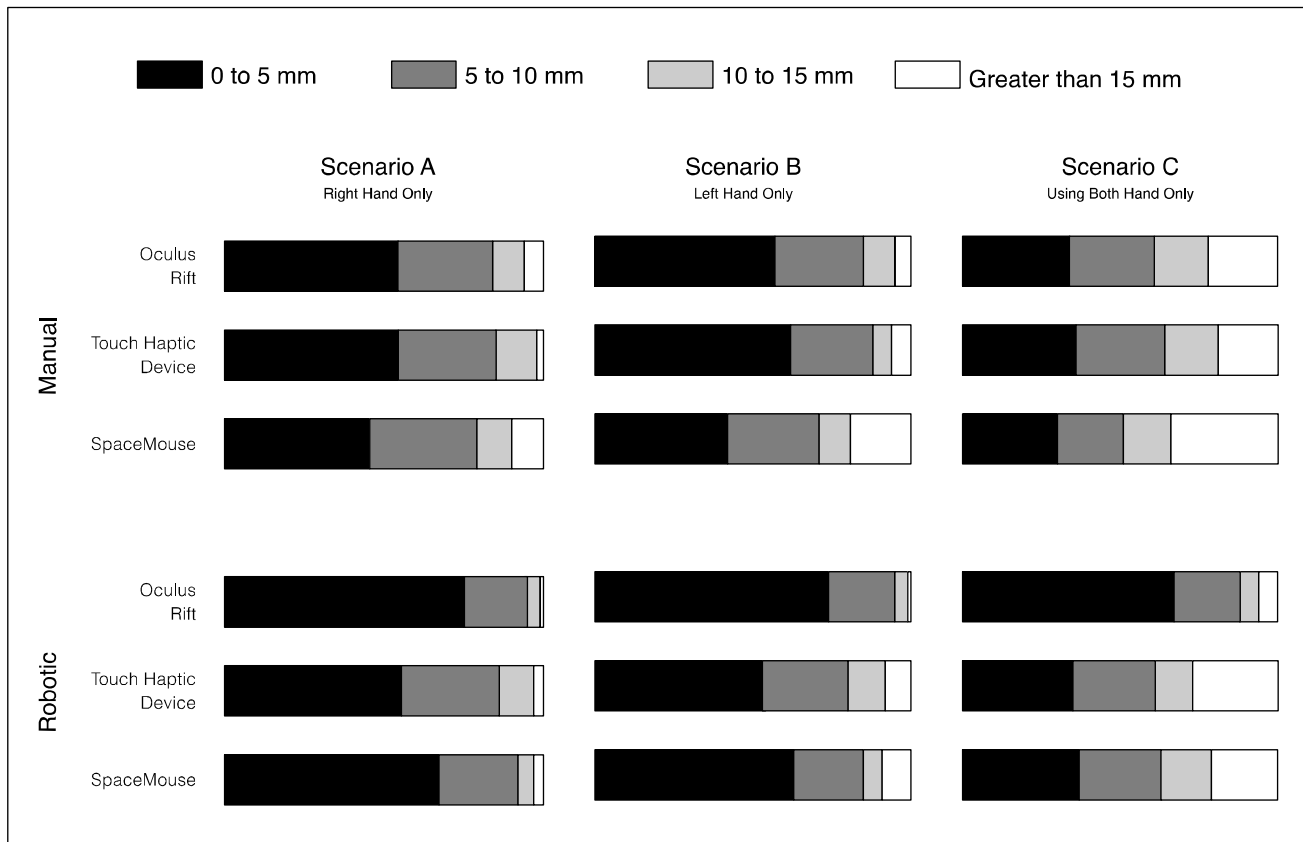


FIGURE 8 Percentage of time spent by the virtual surgical instrument in the four bins with incremental size varying from 0 to 5 mm, 5–10 mm, 10–15 mm, and greater than 15 mm. Each bin represents a range of distances. The shortest distance between the tooltip of the virtual surgical instrument from the path is computed and categorised into one of the four bins. A percentage of time spent in a bin is calculated as the time spent by the tooltip in a given range of distance (corresponding to a bin) with respect to the total duration of the task

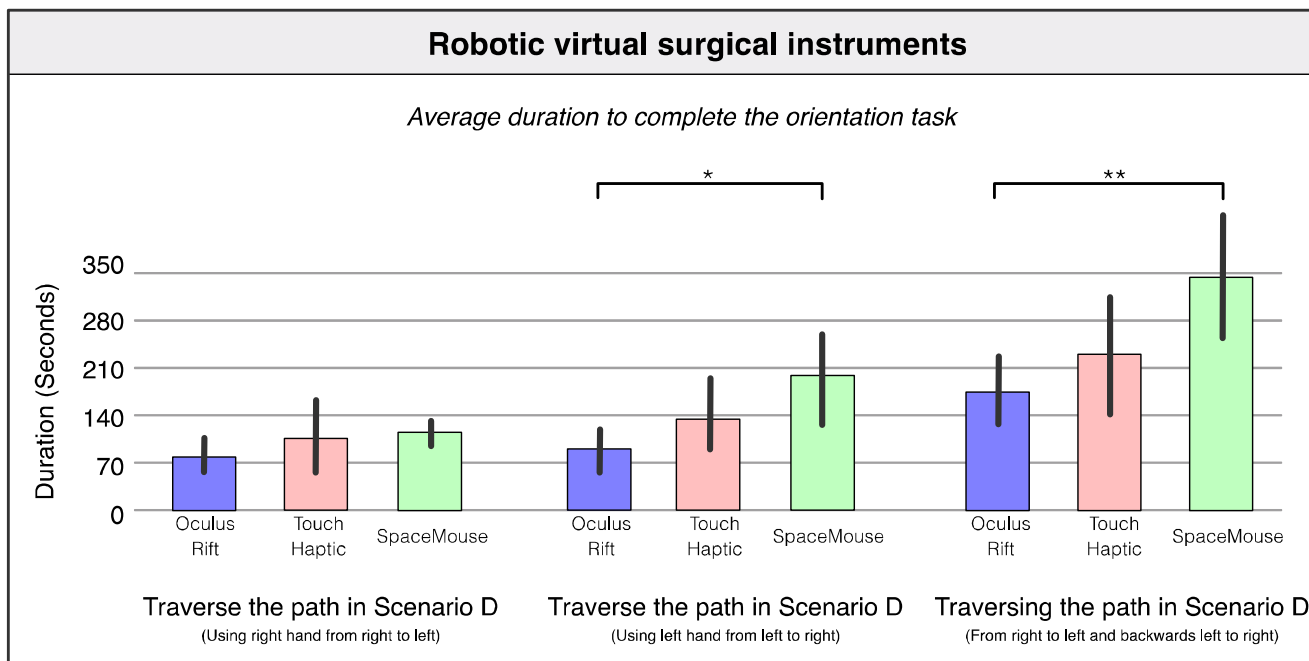


FIGURE 9 Comparison of average orientation time taken by each interface in scenario D when using robotic tools. The comparison is tagged based on the *p*-value using a star-type categorisation: if *p*-value ≤ 0.05 then ‘***’, if 0.05 < *p*-value ≤ 0.1 then ‘**’, and if 0.1 < *p*-value, then ‘*’



direction would be to explore its applicability for open surgeries, where mixed reality²⁸ or augment reality²⁹ can be used to overlay virtual surgical instruments movement on the operating field. As the motion of the instruments are not constrained (in contrast to MIS), the results of the current user study cannot be extrapolated and would require conducting user studies for tele-mentoring scenarios in open surgeries. The second direction could be surgical simulations where an operator interacts with a computer-generated virtual environment of the operating field.³⁰ The user interfaces can be adapted to replicate the controllers present on the console of robotic surgical systems. A comparative user study would identify the user interfaces suitable for interacting the virtual environment.^{31,32} The third direction could be preoperative surgical planning in a mixed reality environment.^{33,34} For interfacing with mixed reality environment, user studies have shown that hand gestures may not be a suitable mode for sending instructions and a suitable user-interface is required.^{35,36}

5 | CONCLUSION

The presented user study compares three off-the-shelf user interface devices in terms of their effectiveness when used to manipulate virtual surgical instruments overlaid onto the operative field during tele-mentoring. Both the Oculus Rift and the Touch Haptic device are preferred over SpaceMouse to demonstrate tool-tissue interactions in tele-mentoring scenarios. However, SpaceMouse is more suitable for positing virtual surgical instruments as a pointing device.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this submission have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licencing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

D. Shabir and N.V. Navkar led the study and manuscript writing. M. Anbatawi and J. Padhan assisted in testing of the user-interfaces and data collection. S. Balakrishnan, A. Al-Ansari and J. Abinshed provided input from the surgical point-of-view to the manuscript. E. Yaacoub and A. Mohammed assisted in the computer networking and provided revisions of the manuscript. Z. Deng provided input in the

human computer interfacing and provided revisions of the manuscript. P. Tsiamyrtzis performed the statistical analysis of the data.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data not sharable.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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