

Urgent Letter Regarding Clinical Activities for M3 and M4 Students

March 17, 2020

Dear Students,

The AAMC has recommended that all clinical clerkship activities be suspended until 3/31/20. We convened all of the directors of the M3 and M4 experiences today to discuss current challenges in delivering a medical education program to you. In addition to the AAMC guidance we provide this:

RATIONALE FOR THE MODIFICATION STRATEGY

1. Elective cases in the operating room have been postponed.
2. Some resident services have been reduced to “weekend coverage” to preserve the workforce.
3. Outpatient visits have been either canceled or will be conducted via telemedicine.
4. Due to multiple inpatient and outpatient clinical sites, there has been variable messaging, and at times confusion from faculty and staff regarding guidelines for medical student education. Additionally, there may be variability in screening activities.
5. There are temporary supply chain issues (gowns) at several sites.
6. We have received guidance from the LCME, our accrediting body, on the types of experiences that can be conducted with alternative learning experiences to meet schoolwide objectives. These guidelines differ between the M3 core and M4 required experiences. There is flexibility in meeting core M3 requirements during elective time in the M4 year, prior to graduation.

Please review the rationale as you read about the proposed modified experiences.

SPECIFIC DETAILS ON M3 REQUIRED CLERKSHIPS:

Suspension of all Clinical Clerkship Activity effective immediately, and through the next block:

Family Medicine

Surgery

Obstetrics and Gynecology

Pediatrics

Psychiatry

Internal Medicine

Neurology

All students will be required to participate in required didactic experiences and completion of alternative exercises for the required clinical encounters for the clerkships beginning with the new block on Monday 3.23.20.

Clinical time will be completed later this academic year or in the next academic year.

Fortunately, there is time in the M4 year to fulfill graduation requirements. Dr. Pradhan will

be coordinating the scheduling of these events with the Drs. Afran, Nieman, Merjanian, Kim, Goodman, Rybinnik and Deo.

We will reevaluate the situation at our institution and rely on guidance from the AAMC but there may be the possibility of resuming clinical clerkship inpatient experiences in medicine, neurology and pediatrics, only at RWJUH or BMS Children's Hospital AFTER 3.31.20. THIS WOULD BE OPTIONAL. **There is still capacity at RWJUH and BMS to see admitted patients who do not have respiratory symptomatology or fever of unclear etiology. Again, this is OPTIONAL and there will be opportunity to complete the inpatient component of these clerkships later this academic year or in the next academic year. Students who do not resume the inpatient activities will still be required to participate in required didactic experiences and completion of alternative exercises for the required clinical encounters for the clerkships.*

Shelf Examinations

We are working to establish testing in environments that are more conservative than the current social distancing recommendations as a means to limit risk to our students. Details will be forthcoming.

SPECIFIC DETAILS ON M4 REQUIRED EXPERIENCES:

Suspension of all Clinical Activity effective immediately for all M4 clerkships, electives and subinternships until 3.31.20. Didactic activities will continue.

We will reevaluate the situation at our health center and rely on guidance from the AAMC but anticipate these changes AFTER 3.31.20:

- 1. Continued suspension of all Emergency Medicine Clinical Clerkship Activity effective immediately, and through the next block.**

All students will be required to participate in required didactic experiences and completion of alternative exercises for the required clinical encounters for the clerkships.

- 2. Completion of Neurology Experience as M4**

This is a required experience and there is capacity at RWJUH for affected students.

- 3. Completion of Modified Adult Medical and Surgical and Pediatric Critical Care Selective**

This is a required experience and we anticipate there will continue to be capacity at RWJUH and BMS Children's Hospital, however, in the effort to reduce the size of teams, and to maintain this required educational experience, students will rotate in the intensive care units for only one week of the rotation. In the remaining time the students will be required to participate in required didactic experiences and completion of alternative exercises.

4. Subinternships:

2-week Subinternships

All students who have completed multiple 4-week subinternships at outside Institutions and have been granted a reduction to a 2-week subinternship, will NOT need to complete the two-week experience.

4-week Subinternships:

Internal medicine

Surgery

Family Medicine

Pediatrics

Obstetrics and Gynecology

Due to the restrictions of clinical activity until 3/31/20 there will be modification to the clinical time students will be required to complete on these sub-internship experiences. This is a required experience and we anticipate there will continue to be capacity at RWJUH and BMS Children's Hospital for clinical experience during blocks 10 and 11. Subinternships at alternative sites will be moved to RWJUH or BMS Children's Hospital.

Electives:

As per our Academic Rules and Regulations we are exploring waiving of 4-weeks of elective time. Additionally, we are exploring online electives for graduating students still needing to complete electives in excess of 4-weeks to fulfill graduation requirements.

We hope that this communication provides some clarity in this rapidly changing situation. Thank you for working with us during these challenging times and for the care you have been providing our patients. We will of course be available to address concerns. Please copy Dr. Pradhan and me on any inquiries sent directly to the directors.

Sincerely,

Dr. Terregino, Dr. Pradhan, all of the M3 and M4 Directors, and the Student Affairs Deans