The national group of UME Deans has been having ongoing discussions around visiting electives during your clerkship. As you should be aware from my previous communications, there will not be visiting electives at the beginning of your clerkship.

In our most recent discussions, consideration was given to two options; we decided that we wanted to bring those options back to our stakeholders at our individual schools. Obviously, the people who would be most affected by these choices includes our class of 2022 students!

Please note that I refer to these as 'proposals': there are several steps that would be required to get a binding national decision around electives. There would be input from everyone involved, including students and UME leaders, but also the PGME leaders. Eventually, the AFMC Board would make a final decision (and that board is made up of the Deans of the 17 Canadian Medical schools).

The first proposal under consideration is trying to re-open visiting electives later in 2021, for example, opening them up in July. Obviously, doing this would depend upon the safety of learners, patients and faculty — which is an unknown at this point, because we don't know where things will be with COVID next July. In order to think about this, we need to work under the assumption that restarting visiting electives will be possible, so that is our starting point. Obvious benefit to this option would be that you could visit other places both to expand your education but also to undertake the 'try out' part of visiting electives. I have little doubt that post-grad programs would prefer this option so that they can have a look at potential applicants. Another benefit is that schools that are in smaller places that don't have access to as many local options would benefit more from having visiting electives. Down side to this option is that there could still be some risks, assuming COVID lingers on. There may be some degree of ongoing safety issues in hospitals, when travelling and with lodging options. Travelling could also be more costly. There may well still be significant travel restrictions and quarantine rules that make travelling to and from some sites less attractive. The final concern I have with this proposal is that it could end up being unfair if the availability of visiting electives changes suddenly: if electives open in July and then close again in September, there will be a lot of variability in access both from school to school and for individual students in our program.

The second proposal is to decide that like the 2021 class, there will be no visiting electives during your clerkship. This has the obvious downside of not allowing you to 'see and be seen' by residency programs, which could absolutely affect the match. One could argue, theoretically that it might increase the chances of matching locally. We’ll have some idea about that in the spring, when we have the 2021 match results, however, hard to know if conclusions about the effect of the pandemic on one class can be extrapolated to the next. This option would eliminate the risks and hassles with interprovincial travel. It would also be the most equal way to approach things — no one having visiting electives rather than some having more or less.

In any event, we’re interested in your thoughts about this; Suzanne and Laura, your hard-working VPs Education have prepared a form (https://forms.gle/dauVn2lfYRdnaoaxL6) that you can use to provide a 'vote' and any thoughts that you would like to express. Dr. Naugler and I will carry those thoughts back to the UME Deans group at our next meeting.

Please provide your input through the form by Sunday October 18. Suzanne and Laura have also graciously agreed to receive emails directly about this topic; however, I’d encourage you to use the form so that the information is collected as efficiently as possible.

Thanks for your thoughts around this.

KB
Assistant Dean