Hey gang! Hope things are going well with your first couple of days as clerks. I have had a few emails from students with some reasonable questions about clerkship issues. Hopefully I can clarify things — knowing that if one or two people have asked, there are probably many more with similar questions.

**COVID Patients**
You are allowed to be involved with looking after COVID patients during clerkship. This is covered on the COVID page of the MD program website (please review the ‘Student Involvement in Patient Care’ document [https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/mdprogram/current-students/student-resources/covid-response-plan](https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/mdprogram/current-students/student-resources/covid-response-plan)). This document is updated from time to time as required.

You will be required to use appropriate PPE. This means continuous masking and the addition of eye protection when you are seeing all patients (COVID or not). For any patients on droplet precautions (this includes COVID positive, probable or possible) you will need to don full PPE (gown, mask, eye protection, gloves) properly and then doff it properly after the interaction with this patient.

You have been trained in how to properly use PPE; it will be important as you move into situations where you have to put this into practice that you make it known that you haven’t done this many times and would appreciate some coaching. Remember that most of the staff in the hospitals has been using PPE for almost a year and so they are great resources at helping you. Feel free to ask a nurse, your preceptor, a resident or one of the Limpkins to watch you don and doff your PPE and give you feedback. Now is the time when you want to learn to do this properly!

Clerks are not allowed to be involved in the care of patients who are COVID positive where there is an aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP) being performed, which requires all health care providers to wear full PPE including a properly fitted N95 mask. The exception to this rule is in anesthesia or ICU rotations (whether mandatory or electives); for students starting these rotations, you will be contacted by Michelle Krbavac in UME who will make arrangements for you to come in to UME to be fitted for the N95 mask that is most available at that time. This decision was made after discussions with the educational leaders in these clinical areas: it was felt that students would have a very limited educational experience in these areas if they weren’t able to interact with patients while using an N95 mask.

In the hospitals, AHS has indicated that students should not be assigned to be part of the team that is providing patient care on designated COVID wards. Students could potentially be on those wards to do consults, however, this would be at the discretion of the student’s preceptor and in most cases the preceptor would likely send the student to see a different patients if possible (the idea is to limit the traffic on the COVID wards where possible).

Students may or may not be able to be on wards that are designated as being on outbreak or watch. That is determined on a unit by unit basis and really depends on the specific characteristics of the particular situation. The final decision comes from the Medical Site Leader for the AHS who communicates with us once a decision has been made. That may also include, in some situations, a requirement for students to have COVID testing done in order to provide information about the spread of the outbreak (or lack thereof).

**Elective Limits**
Students have expressed concerns about how electives will be distributed with the removal of our own local cap on the elective numbers. The need to do this has been downloaded to the elective coordinators in each of the departments. We will continue to be directive to those individuals about
being sensitive to the fact that there needs to be a consideration of fairness when doling out elective spots in this unusual situation.

**Deferrals and Rewrites**

If you have dragged yourself through the Clerkship Handbook, you may have seen mention of rewrite/deferral dates in clerkship, but no clear mention of what those dates actually are. We will have two rewrite and deferral times. One of these is in the weeks prior to the date when we need to submit the MSPR for the CaRMS match; the second date is at the end of clerkship. At this point, we have a skeletal outline of the CaRMS timeline for your class so we can think about the date for the ‘pre-CaRMS’ rewrites/deferrals; given the MSPR timing, it will probably be in early December. The later date will be at the end of clerkship in April (assuming there aren’t any changes to your clerkship timeline due to the pandemic — fingers crossed that this doesn’t happen!).

There will undoubtedly be other questions that come up. Once I have a few topics, I’ll send out more updates. There will also be some updates that go to both the Limpkins and Tanukis (e.g. anything related to units on watch or outbreak). Please make sure that you stay on top of reading these.

Enjoy your learning!

KB

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