March 25, 2020

Boops Boops and Limpkins

Again, some good news to start: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/u-of-c-covid-19-contact-tracing-1.5509022?fbclid=IwAR0X9pyeRt3jIBakIuXX8JgJERgKN9vxT_SkgBegaKqEdbtp33NjYHSj45k. So cool! Great work. I have also been told by the student coordinators that our clerks have provided great services for the students providing family care for health care workers and a huge number of volunteers to manage the command centre for the Complex Care Hub. Awesome!

On to the updates.

2020s

Everyone has been informed by Dr. Desy (Assistant Dean, Evaluations and Research) that the exam team has decided to take all of our exams online, in consideration of safety (students and staff) and the requirements of the University. Her email earlier this week laid things out in detail. We are ready to go for our first round of exams this Friday, March 27.

Dr. Desy is also leading the ongoing development of the Competency Committee, which I have described in previous emails. Their plan is to start with a review of students who have outstanding remediation, make-up time, rewrite and deferred exams and make a decision about how and when to address these deficiencies. I am sorry that this is taking time, but we need to have a clear process to do this so that we can demonstrate that your degree is valid.

With the move to online exams, there is really no longer a need (from the UME perspective) for students to remain in Calgary. As per Dr. Desy’s email, we can accommodate people writing exams in different time zones. This should free up some students who have expressed concerns about looming travel restrictions.

2021s
Dr. Naugler and I participated earlier today in the online meeting of the AFMC UG Deans group this morning. There continues to be general support for some principles that need to guide when clerks return to the clinical environment. First, it needs to be safe. That includes both safety for students and all other health care workers (e.g. many jurisdictions have limited PPE and there would not be enough to supply students and still have enough for others). Second, a return needs to occur at a time point when there will be enough care providers that students will receive a good quality educational experience. Finally, the group continues to agree that we have to make efforts to not disadvantage students from any school. That is particularly pertinent for schools like U of C and McMaster, who have less time in clerkship to begin with.

At this point, however, because of regional disparities, there is no agreed upon date when all schools will have students back into clinical clerkships. It's important to keep in mind that there are ‘higher powers’ that have absolute governance over when clerks can restart: the University, AHS Clinical Departments and Public Health all have to agree that you can be back into your rotations.

Based on conversations with one of our Medical Officers of Health and our Dean’s Office, we have been advised that we will not be able to have students back in for at least three months. Therefore, we have decided to plan for the return to clerkship no earlier than June 15. This is closely aligned with decisions at several other schools (e.g. five of six Ontario schools), who have proposed a return date of July 5. Of course, it is possible that our return will be later than mid-June, but it won’t be earlier.

This is pertinent for those of you who are looking to travel to be with family and friends. There is no need for you to be in Calgary at this time: any education that we do will be done online.

There is a separate conversation about plans for the UCLIC students that involves UME, DLRI and the UCLIC clerkship leaders. We will communicate directly with UCLIC students by email.

The AFMC UG Deans group will be working with CaRMS to make plans to adjust the timelines for the Match for 2021. We do feel that there is significant flexibility to make this happen. As of today’s meeting, the AFMC UG Deans still feel that we can plan for a residency start date of July 1, 2021.
Therefore, our next planning process will start this Friday, at our next Clerkship Committee meeting:

1. Starting plans for how we will adjust the clerkship rotations and timelines. There is little doubt that we will need to extend the clerkship beyond our usual mid-April endpoint. We will also need to look at how we will use the time that is available to ensure that we both meet the requirements to train students broadly in medicine (i.e. mandatory rotations) as well as support students to have adequate career exploration and supporting CaRMS applications through electives. We are going to have further discussions through the national UME Deans group about how we will make electives work, both locally and for visiting students.

2. Planning educational programs through virtual learning in all clerkships while students are out of clinical placements. We are fortunate that the development work for this has already largely taken place for the Boops in their final weeks of clerkship. The goal would be to complete as much of the ‘non-clinical’ learning now to maximize your time on the clinical side when you are back in clerkship.

At a higher level, we’re also going to have to start looking at how this will affect future classes. We’re going to need to look broadly at the timelines for the Tanukis to start clerkship as well as the classes that follow them. Everything we do will have ripple effects.

I would like to set up a Zoom Q and A session next week. Information on a date and time will follow.

I appreciate that this process is upsetting and that uncertainty about your progress through medical school is making us all anxious. We’ve got a great team in UME that is working to both make the best decisions possible and keep you up to date on all of the changes. You’ve all been really reasonable and supportive. That has really helped the whole team in UME. Thanks.

Stay well.

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