

AACOM Message on Medical Student Participation in Clinical Activities

March 17, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly impacting all aspects of life. As our medical schools and teaching hospitals work to address the steadily mounting challenges, including balancing the demands of clinical care with those of education, collaboration across institutions is essential.

Effective immediately, the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine calls upon our member institutions to join a very important and urgent effort that we believe will create an opportunity for us to find a meaningful way forward at this unprecedented time.

This recommendation is being jointly issued by AACOM and the COCA. AACOM will continue to work closely with the COCA to address on-time graduation and other educational concerns.

The rationale and goals of this urgent effort are summarized below:

1. Depending upon local conditions and responses that may already be in place, AACOM strongly supports a minimum two-week 'pause' of medical student participation in any activities that involve patient contact. Local conditions and resources may determine that a longer or shorter pause is indicated.
2. This 'pause' will allow our medical schools a window of opportunity to develop and implement appropriate programs to fully educate all their students for an eventual return to the clinical setting with 1) up-to-date information on COVID-19; and 2) appropriate steps in place to ensure patient and personal safety.
3. This 'pause' will contribute to the conservation of personal protective equipment (PPE) across our institutions while the full extent and likely trajectory of COVID-19 becomes better understood and more widespread testing is implemented. While some localities remain relatively unaffected, it is fully conceivable that in the near future there may be acute shortages of PPE in some localities and such resources may have to be pooled across institutions.
4. During this 'pause', AACOM will continue to organize efforts by our medical education community, including our learners, to compile and disseminate information and resources for alternative clinical learning approaches, including the identification of critically important learner roles in their institutional response to COVID-19 that support patient care but may not necessarily involve direct patient contact.

We recognize the important roles that medical students play on healthcare teams and encourage innovative approaches by school leaders in safely and appropriately engaging their students'

extraordinary dedication, passion and skills for the benefit of the patients and other healthcare workers.

Our students, faculty and entire workforce are looking to us for clear guidance during this uncertain time. More importantly, the public needs our professionalism, commitment and care during this very challenging time. Let us continue close and regular contact and share experiences in real time.