

3/15/2020 – Update to MS3 class

Dear MS3s,

We wanted to touch base with you all before tomorrow, when many of you will be starting a new clerkship and the rest will be returning to clinical rotations. There is a lot of uncertainty about what the future holds right now, and we are all feeling it. We want to let you know that we care deeply about your education, helping you get ready for residency applications, and your health and well being!

The COVID-19 situation is still evolving and changes are happening day by day. For example, yesterday the surgeon general of the United States urged all medical facilities to cancel all elective surgeries to make sure we have resources and space available for patients who need it. Upstate is following these recommendations. Today, Upstate also made the decision to limit non-urgent in-person ambulatory visits and recommended telemedicine wherever available. Clinical departments are going to be making the jump to telemedicine as soon as they can over the next few days to weeks.

We are following the advice and guidance of the AAMC with regard to medical student education. Students on core clinical rotations / clerkships (i.e. MS3s) are still allowed to participate in direct patient care activities, but we are going to prevent MS3s from contact / care for patients known or suspected cases of COVID-19. Certainly this could change. There has been at least one medical school in NYC where medical students have been pulled completely from rotations. We are hoping to maximize educational experiences in the time we have before the situation becomes more serious, so that we can avoid having you all to come back to complete clerkships later and potentially interfere with 4th year plans. We are going to try to get as much of the in-person requirements done ASAP so that if we can't continue with in-person activities, the rest could be done by modalities like video conference or simulated computer cases. Clerkships are working on transitioning many of the lectures / conferences to online/remote learning over the next few days/weeks to prioritize social distancing when possible

We would encourage you to try to finish your directly observed H&Ps and clinical logging ASAP. Clerkships have been encouraged to make this happen this week.

We are quite excited about the telemedicine option too. This is a great way to get involved with patient care with low risk of viral exposure. Clerkships have been encouraged to have students be active participants in telemedicine once it is live. It's pretty exciting because this could be a new wave of health care delivery.

In terms of your own health and wellbeing, we know that everyone is stressed by the current situation. Try to find things that make you feel whole and well. Follow the advice from CDC for healthcare providers in terms of how to keep yourself safe and when you should call to report that you need to stay home (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html>). Remember the Upstate COVID-19 triage line 315-464-THEM (4-THEM if on Upstate campus) that you can call with questions. Additionally, we fully support the AAMC

recommendation that if any of you have a “health condition that puts them at high risk or have unique circumstances (e.g., caregiver for an immunosuppressed family member)” that you should contact the UME office, student affairs, or student health so that we can help “identify educational experiences that reduce their risk while meeting educational requirements”.

Here are some links that I believe are worthwhile. You may have already seen them.

1. A series of educational videos about COVID-19 by Osmosis. Their chief medical officer, Dr. Rishi Desai, is a pediatric infectious disease specialist and a former virologist at the CDC. I’ve watched them all and found them very helpful. https://www.osmosis.org/covid-19?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_content=awareness-general&utm_term=email-blog-post&utm_campaign=covid19-facts

2. A reminder of how to properly don and doff PPE - <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/ppe-sequence.pdf> Although we are not allowing medical students to participate in the care of patients with known or suspected COVID-19, I am of the opinion that as much education as possible is always a good thing.

3. Editorial written by a current MS3 at Stanford based on their own experience (<https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/14/medical-students-can-help-combat-covid-19/>) And I would like to reiterate the words of our chief medical officer Dr. Amy Tucker Amy Tucker “As we stand together during this time of global crisis, we ask each of you to treat your colleagues, our patients, and our guests, with kindness and respect. We are asking everyone to come together, dig deep and remain strong in solidarity to face the COVID-19 pandemic. We will remain stalwart in our mission to serve the people of Central New York and one another. Take care of yourselves, your colleagues, and our patients. This is what we do, this is who we are. We are Upstate.”

Please let us know about questions you have. We will keep you updated as the days go forward. Stay informed, stay healthy, and take care of yourself!

Matt Mason
Assistant Dean for Clinical Sciences

Leann Lesperance
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education