Helping student and resident programs minimize disruption during COVID-19

Watch the AMA's daily COVID-19 update, with insights from AMA leaders and experts about the pandemic.

Featured topic and speakers

AMA Chief Experience Officer Todd Unger speaks with AMA Vice President of UME Innovations Kimberly Lomis, MD, Vice President of GME Innovations John Andrews, MD, and Vice President of Member Programs Kristen Tinney on updates regarding COVID-19 including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student and resident education, and what resources are available to help them stay on track.

Learn more at the AMA COVID-19 resource center.

Transcript

Unger: Hello. This is the American Medical Association's COVID-19 update. Today, we're discussing the impact of COVID-19 on student and resident education and what resources are available to help them stay on track. I'm joined today by Dr. Kimberly Lomis, AMA's vice president of Undergraduate Medical Education Innovations in Nashville, Tennessee, Dr. John Andrews, AMA's vice president of Graduate Medical Education Innovations in Chicago, and Kristen Tinney, AMA's vice president of Member Programs in Chicago. I'm Todd Unger, AMA's chief experience officer in Chicago.

The impact of COVID-19 has been felt by residents and medical students across the country, as well as their institutions. Dr. Lomis, Dr. Andrews, what are the educational challenges posed by COVID-19 and the anticipated impact of those challenges?

Dr. Lomis: So, Todd, as you know, we've spoken before the disruption to medical education is extensive and some of those changes impact across institutions, across schools. I think for today, we're most interested in thinking about, at a given institution, what has happened. And as students
were pulled from clinical rotations or sent home from physical classrooms, schools have had to do a bit of scrambling to make sure that they're still delivering meaningful content as they shift to distance learning. We do know that there will be some disruption and gaps in the preparedness of these students. And so making sure that we have tools available to address those gaps and that we monitor as they progress from UME into GME will be an important aspect.

Dr. Andrews: Yeah. Todd, thanks. Just to follow up on that on the graduate medical education side, the challenges are related but slightly different. The process of graduate medical education is one of clinical immersion. And what we're seeing at hospitals that are dealing with a high burden of coronavirus patients is that residents are moving from the specialty in which they're training into other clinical areas in order to provide care to that patient population. And so that tends to derail the progress that they're making toward certification in their specialty.

When elective surgeries get canceled, surgeons don't have access to the clinical experience that they require to learn those skills. They're spending more of their time in ICUs, nonmedical units, providing care to COVID patients. So there's some concern about the progress towards certification in their specialty. And it's also the case, similar to what Dr. Lomis just mentioned, that curriculum that used to be delivered in a very organized fashion is no longer possible because groups aren't getting together to have discussions in person, grand rounds, other formats in which more didactic material is delivered. So it's been quite a disruptive influence.

Unger: And, Ms. Tinney, let's talk a little bit about the curriculum part. Just like in medicine, we've seen a huge progress on the telemedicine side to allow people to handle that virtually, physicians. Similarly, we're seeing a burst of the need for online education for students and residents. Can you talk about what the AMA is doing to help there?

Tinney: Yeah, absolutely. Thank you, Todd. So just like Dr. Lomis and Dr. Andrews said, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted education and we're working to fill those gaps. We have two online education programs and we're making those available for free for a limited time. We have a curriculum for medical students, and we have a curriculum for residents. And if your institution doesn't have access to those, they will be free and available through September 30, 2020.

Unger: Can you talk a little bit about the type of curriculum for students and for residents?

Tinney: Absolutely. Our curriculum for medical students really focuses on health system science. And I know, Dr. Lomis, if you'd like to share a little bit about health system science and the 13 modules, they are going to be available on-demand and will help a learner progress through the health system science material.

Dr. Lomis: Sure. I'll jump in there. The health system science, for those who aren't familiar with that construct, it's a framework that uses systems thinking to unite key areas such as patient safety and quality improvement, but also social determinants of health and population health, basically how care
is delivered and how the system impacts what any individual physician can or cannot achieve. The pandemic has painfully shown us all how critical these systems issues are.

So this has been an area of focus for the AMA's Accelerating Change in Medical Education Consortium. And fortunately, because of that, our experts had already built these modules and had them available and ready to go. The difference that we're seeing now is that in addition to just having the online modules available for free, that the platform is offering an opportunity for a school to assign specific modules that are most relevant to their curriculum needs and to track whether students complete those. We did see a big spike in March. People are definitely interested in using these. We've seen hundreds of students completing these, and the AMA truly believes that training in health system science is critical to empower physicians to have more control over their own work environment and to optimize the care that they deliver to patients.

Unger: And those modules that are available on the AMA Ed Hub™. Let's talk about it on that graduate medical education side. Ms. Tinney, what kind of curriculum are we looking at there?

Tinney: So on the graduate medical education side, we have selected six of our most popular and most relevant courses and are making those available for free. Dr. Andrews, maybe you could talk a little bit about the six modules that we've selected and why those are so important for the onboarding time that will begin in July.

Dr. Andrews: Sure. Thanks, Kristen. The modules we selected for our graduate medical education programs relate quite directly to some of the experience of being a resident during the response to COVID-19. So there's a module on wellbeing. There's a module on patient safety. There's a module on end of life care. And I know a lot of our residents are confronting uncomfortable situations related to end of life care for patients whose families aren't around them, and I think they'll find some value in devoting some of their attention to this so that they have some skills development in that area.

Unger: And, Ms. Tinney, how would a residency institution connect with AMA about that?

Tinney: They can go to the AMA Ed Hub™ to learn more. We have a form that you can complete, and we'll contact you as soon as we get your information.

Unger: So in addition to the disruption in education, fourth-year medical students, like many graduates, are missing out on celebrating their milestones. It started with match day, and now we're on to graduation. Ms. Tinney, what is the AMA doing to address this?

Tinney: Well, in addition to filling some of those educational gaps, we want to fill some of the gaps on the personal losses as well. And we heard from our Medical Student Section that they really wanted to celebrate graduation, and so we decided to go really big.

I'm excited to announce that we'll be hosting AMA's tribute to the medical school class of 2020. And
this virtual event is going to take place on May 20 at 6:00 PM Central Time. And it will premiere on our YouTube and Facebook channels. Think of it as a national celebration to honor the next generation of physicians. And I won't tell you all of the guests, but one of them is Dr. Fauci, and we're really excited. We know it’s not a substitute for your own graduation, but we do think it’s going to be something really special for medical students and their families.

Unger: Well, that's terrific. And I think we'll be releasing more information about a terrific lineup of the top physicians in this country to provide words of encouragement and inspiration to medical students and help you celebrate this important achievement in your lifetimes. So stay tuned for more information about the AMA tribute to medical student class of 2020 on the AMA site.

That's it for today's COVID-19 update. I want to thank Dr. Lomis, Dr. Andrews and Ms. Tinney for being here today and sharing your perspectives. We'll be back tomorrow with another COVID-19 update.

For additional resources on COVID-19, including the ones you heard about today, go to ama-assn.org/COVID-19. Thanks for being with us.

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