

### **New Guidance (04/01/20):**

Our leadership group has been reviewing the changing conditions related to Covid-19 and how it is affecting our clinical sites. We have been making month-to-month decisions in the hopes that things would improve to allow for a return to clinical rotations. After careful review of our current conditions and likely trends over the coming months, we are announcing today that **we will extend our suspension of clinical rotations another month, through June 5. We will resume clinical rotations with Period 2, on June 8.** We're informing our community now to help clarify planning and allow people to make decisions more easily.

Although this is a hard decision, we also feel we need to be realistic. Many other schools have suspended their clinical rotations; the likelihood for us to return to clinical sites in May is so low at this point that we don't want to delay the decision any further.

Many wonder how these decisions are made. Briefly, UPSOM's Strategy and Planning Committee, consisting of key deans from several offices, makes recommendations to Deans Thompson and Levine who make the final decision. Recommendations and decisions about clinical rotations have been made based on a variety of factors: hospital/clinic volume, site availability and openness, telemedicine capabilities and expertise, faculty time/availability, PPE/testing availability, guidance from national organizations (e.g., AAMC) as well as trends in peer institutions. The other factor, of course, is the news that Prometric testing centers will be closed until 4/30 at many sites, making Step 1 completion very difficult for our students. Everything is being pushed back.

It is possible that this will need to be extended through June (Period 2) at least for some clerkships or students, although based on our assessment, we're more optimistic that most if not all clerkships and clinical electives will be able to run at that time, perhaps in modified form (e.g., utilizing telemedicine).

Instead of having clerkship/elective directors planning for May rotations that are unlikely to come to pass, we want to cancel now, so that we can work together to plan for what is likely to be a very disrupted 2020-21 academic year. We will assemble a group of administrators, faculty, and student representatives to plan for how we will manage the year given this truncation. To make this work for students, with the goal of insuring that our program learning objectives are met and that students reach their milestones to apply for residencies on time, we will be considering a variety of options:

- Expanding capacity on rotations where possible
- Shortening clinical experience duration where possible (both for clerkships and AIs)
- Offloading didactics/cases to be done remotely now with shorter clinical experiences later
- Extended the deadline for completion of clerkships
- Prioritizing rising MS4 needs for AIs and completion of missing clerkships
- Developing a process to fill dropped spots more quickly to assure full use of available spots
- Collaborating with clinical sites on using telemedicine for teaching
- Shifting dates/periods/intersessions/vacations to accommodate the changes

Just to be clear: rising MS3s and MS4s will be able to **take electives remotely** during the time of clinical suspension. We are working to expand our roster of such experiences for Period 12.5 and Period 1; we may be able to allow for remote "away rotations" at other schools who are all doing the same thing for their students. All non-clinical electives will continue to run remotely—research, narrative medicine,

neuropharm, etc. We will try to develop a catalogue of such offerings to make it easier for students to switch in to them.

For current MS2s studying for **Step 1**, this means that you will have more time and flexibility to complete Step 1. You can schedule in May and take a study month then, hopefully returning for clerkships in June. But if you cannot get a testing date in time for that, you could also restart clerkships in June and take Step 1 later (by 12/31/20), using a study month later if you need.

**Preclerkship week** will be moved from its current May 4 week to the week of June 1. While we hope to do this in-person, we acknowledge it's very likely this will be a remote learning activity as well. [Even if hospitals and clinic sites allow for students to work, Pitt may not be ready to reopen Scaife for learning groups by then—remember, they have cancelled their on-campus summer classes and are planning remote education through until August.] If we would suspend rotations for June, which is possible, we would try to move Preclerkship Week back again, to keep it contiguous with the start of clerkships for MS2s. That also means that Humanism Day and the Pinning Ceremony will take place at the end of that week, whenever it is (currently, Friday June 5).

Students can stay where they are for now. But if you will need to travel back to Pittsburgh for June, we strongly encourage you to **consider coming back two weeks early** to account for the possibility of self-quarantine requirements upon your return, or other travel issues. This depends on your unique circumstances and geography of course.

Again, we know this is far from ideal. And we know that there will be many challenges and problems. But we also want to provide more schedule certainty to enable everyone to make decisions more easily.

Thanks, as always, for your understanding and flexibility in these difficult times. Stay safe and healthy.