



**Association of  
American Medical Colleges**  
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20001-2399  
T 202 828 0400  
aamc.org

March 17, 2020

## **Guidance on Medical Students' Clinical Participation: Effective Immediately**

*Alison Whelan, MD, AAMC Chief Medical Education Officer; John Prescott, MD, AAMC Chief Academic Officer; Geoffrey Young, PhD, AAMC Senior Director of Student Affairs and Programs; Veronica M. Catanese, MD, MBA, AAMC Senior Director of Accreditation Services; Co-Secretary, LCME*

The COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly affecting 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 all institutions is essential. Recognizing these extraordinary circumstances, **starting immediately, the AAMC strongly supports our member medical schools in placing, at minimum, a two-week suspension on their medical students' participation in any activities that involve patient contact.**

This recommendation is jointly issued by the AAMC and LCME.

Depending on local situations, individual schools may determine that a longer suspension is indicated. The AAMC understands that the nature of this pandemic is changing quickly, and that medical centers will continue to adapt as circumstances change. This recommendation is not intended to take precedence over an academic medical center's independent judgment of the immediate needs of its patients and preparation of its students.

The rationale for and goals of this temporary suspension are summarized below:

1. First and foremost, this temporary suspension will allow medical schools a window of opportunity to develop and implement appropriate programs to fully educate all their students for their return to clinical rotations with (a) up-to-date information on COVID-19; and (b) appropriate steps in place to ensure their own and their patients' safety.
2. Second, this temporary suspension will contribute to the conservation of personal protective equipment (PPE) across our institutions. The full extent and likely trajectory

of COVID-19 will become better understood as more widespread testing is implemented. Some localities remain relatively unaffected; however, there are currently shortages of PPE in some localities that may become acute, necessitating such resources to be pooled across institutions.

During this two-week period, the AAMC will 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 the institutional response to COVID-19 that support patient care but may not necessarily involve direct patient contact.

We appreciate that this interruption and reorganization in student education raises concerns for students about timely graduation. The LCME Secretariat should be contacted regarding any significant changes in the structure, timing, duration, and/or location of the medical education program. We also recognize the important roles that medical students play on health care teams and encourage school leaders' adoption of innovative approaches that safely and appropriately engage their students' extraordinary dedication, passion, and skills for the benefit of the patients and other health care workers. We call on our member institutions' leaders, faculty, and learners to join in this very important and urgent effort. We also recognize that the interruption raises concerns for students about their role on the health care team and ask all institutions to commit to the reintegration of students as soon as is appropriate, to find appropriate ways to meet graduation requirements and educational objectives, to open dialogue with students, and to engage them in creating solutions. By working collaboratively, we will find the appropriate way forward at this unprecedented time.