A message from the heads of the London school of medicine and medical specialties

These are unprecedented times. Even those of us who have been doctors for more than 30 years have never dealt with anything like this. As Heads of the School of Medicine we want to reassure you that your welfare is foremost in our minds. Many changes will take place over the next days and weeks. These may cause confusion and, at times real concern, but we will not allow them to have a negative impact on your long term career progression. Exams will be cancelled, interviews will not take place as planned and the team are looking at how future recruitment can be delivered remotely. Rotations for April (probably May, June and July as well) will be delayed. In the long term we will work to mitigate the impact of these measures, making sure that everything normalises once life returns to normal, which it will.

* Your safety and health; please make this your priority. Make sure you have clear guidance on where and when you should wear PPE and which types of PPE you should wear in different scenarios. If you are not receiving regular and clear guidance on this please escalate your concerns in the usual way to your supervisors and if necessary to your director of medical education. If despite this you remain concerned feel free to message me (twitter @DocDeaner). If you have an underlying health condition or take immunosuppressive medication let your supervisors know and self isolate as needed. If you develop symptoms suggesting you have COVID-19 make sure you declare this and take appropriate measures to protect yourself and others.
* Courses, conferences etc; more or less everything is cancelled unless directly related to treating COVID-19 or resuscitation. We do not want trainees to be out of pocket so follow the updated study leave guidance
* Exams; All MRCP(UK) exams have been cancelled until September as have all specialty clinical examinations. This will not prevent starting an ST3 post, you will be able to progress without full MRCP. Further information is available on the JRCPTB website.
* Rotations; All April, May and June rotations have been put on hold.
* ARCPs; it is expected these will be significantly modified and performed without the usual panel process. This will be ‘light touch’ and you will not be disadvantaged if you have been ill or if you have been unable to get WPBAs etc. Please don’t worry about ARCPs
* Interviews; in normal circumstances this would be a busy time for interviews. There are on going discussions as to how to deal with this. Certainly there will be no face to face interviews from this point. We are looking at ways to do interviews in other ways but accept that both junior and senior colleagues are unlikely to be available in the short to medium term. We will keep you informed. At some point a fair and transparent process will take place.
* Redeployment; It may be necessary to ask you to change roles during the next few weeks and we hope you will be flexible about what you do. It is expected that you will not be asked to work beyond your capabilities and that you will have an appropriate induction and have close clinical supervision. Again, if you feel this is not the case, escalate locally in the usual way but let me know if despite your best efforts you are left feeling vulnerable. If you miss out on your usual learning opportunities don’t worry, there will be time to catch up and your TPDs will be understanding.

I will endeavour to keep you informed of any further important changes or information.

These next weeks and months will be tough. The best way to get through this will be working together. Remember that everyone; patients and their relatives, as well as colleagues will be stressed as well as a little scared. Be understanding and more than anything be kind to each other. Working as a doctor is a huge privilege but comes with equally significant responsibility, never more so than at such times of adversity. Do your very best and look after each other, we will come out of this stronger than ever.

A further communication will come from HEE this week directing you to resources and FAQs. As these are developed to meet these extenuating circumstances.

Andrew Deaner

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