Dear COM – T Students,

I realize that situation with COVID-19 may be creating uncertainty for you, and that concerns will vary for each class based on upcoming curriculum-related events. The COM – T continues to work closely with the University of Arizona Health Sciences, the University of Arizona, and Banner Health in assessing the situation daily and updating recommendations and policies when needed.

At the point, we recommend against international travel. No other travel advice or restrictions are in place at the moment. I suggest that you consider domestic travel carefully and base your decision on your need to travel.

One of your peers asked specific questions, which are listed below.

Question: How will this affect the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills exam?

Answer: Currently, the COVID-19 outbreak has not affected Step 2 CS scheduling. If COVID-19 does prevent students from traveling to Step 2 CS sites and taking the exam, the COM – T will work with all other medical schools, the AAMC, the NBME, and the ACGME to identify solutions.

Question: What will be the impact on our home rotations? What will happen if we have an exposure to the virus? Will we need to be quarantined?

Answer: At the moment, there is no effect on home rotations. I expect a statement soon from UAHS and Banner leadership that clarifies who should go into a room of any patient with isolation precautions. I expect that those entering the room will be only those who have direct patient care responsibilities for that patient (which may certainly include a student if s/he is following the patient). If you are suspected of being infected with COVID-19, you will need to remain at home. We will work with students on an individual basis should this occur.

Question: What will be the impact on our away rotations? Are we likely to be barred from doing away rotations? What if the school where we want to do away rotations refuses to receive students?

Answer: At the moment, domestic away rotations remain unaffected. However, it is possible that states or schools will issue policies in the coming weeks possibly affecting away rotations. Please work with your house dean if you have specific concerns.

Question: How will the Rural and Global health program be affected?

Answer: As above, international travel is not currently recommended. As such, the Global Health Program is working on alternative experiences for students scheduled to do international rotations.
in the short term or planning on delaying these rotations.

Question: What if we don't finish our units to graduate?

Answer: While I hope this does not occur, the COM – T will provide ways to mitigate this.

I urge everyone to remain calm but concerned. Please go about your daily activities. General guidelines include the following:

- Diligent hand washing, particularly after touching surfaces in public. Use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol is a reasonable alternative if the hands are not visibly dirty.
- Respiratory hygiene (e.g., covering the cough or sneeze with tissue paper).
- Avoiding touching the face (in particular eyes, nose, and mouth).
- Cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are frequently touched.

The University of Arizona has a COVID-19 website that is updated regularly: https://health.arizona.edu/healthalerts?

For more information, including advice on travel, visit the CDC COVID-19 site, also updated regularly: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

We will provide updates as we are informed of new information.

Best,

KM

--

Kevin F. Moynahan, MD FACP  He/Him/His
Deputy Dean, Education
Director, Societies Program
Professor of Medicine
University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson