

UPSOM Response to Covid19 Coronavirus Outbreak: *3/16/20 UPDATE*

We have updated our community guidance in a few areas, which are highlighted at the top. At the bottom are previously issued but still valid recommendations, just as a reminder.

The situation continues to be rapidly changing. We will continue to post guidance as necessary, to keep our community informed. Check your e-mail frequently for updates from the school. We will post updated guidance on Navigator (bannered at the top):

<https://navigator.medschool.pitt.edu/alerts/UPSOMResponsetoCovid19.pdf>

Although there still have not yet been reported cases of this coronavirus in Pittsburgh, it is likely it will come to our community. The safety of our students, faculty, staff and the overall university community remains our highest priority.

In issuing guidelines, UPSOM is closely following recommendations from the CDC. We are obliged to follow guidelines from the University of Pittsburgh.

New Guidance (3/16/20):

We hope everyone is doing OK, taking care of themselves, while we all try to get through this crisis. We want to talk about three issues in today's guidance: **clinical rotations, Step 1, and volunteering/service.**

Clinical Rotations

Effective immediately, **we are suspending all MS3-4 clinical rotations, for a period of two weeks**, until we can determine the safety and educational value of continuing. This is based on changes at UPMC and in the community that have made it increasingly difficult for students to participate effectively in clinical rotations (transportation issues, declining patient volume, shortages of personal protective equipment, etc.). Students don't want to inadvertently infect ill patients in the hospital, and some are understandably concerned for their own safety. Given all of these factors, we feel we need to call for a pause in clinical rotations until we can determine what makes the most sense going forward.

- This includes all required clerkships and other clinical rotations. It doesn't include non-clinical electives (e.g., a research month).
- Clerkships or clinical electives may provide you with remote learning over these next two weeks (e.g., didactics via Zoom or Team, Aquifer cases, online modules) to help fill the gap in your learning.
- Assessments at the end of Period 11 (e.g., the SHELF exam or OSCE) will be conducted as planned for March 26-27.
- Specifics on all of this will be provided for you by the clerkship/elective director.

This will enable you to complete the rotation and get credit for period 11, which is the goal. We hope that because you've already done two weeks (plus today) of the rotation, if you do self-study and/or other learning activities over these next two weeks, you will have earned full credit for this period.

Students taking a two-month clerkship (medicine or surgery/anesthesiology) will return in period 12 (hopefully) and pick up with the rest of their rotation; we hope that that would “count” to fulfilling the entire eight weeks as well (with the only exception being for students who miss anesthesiology, who will have to make it up in some fashion, to be determined). Specialty Care Clerkship has yet to be determined in terms of how the two week pause will affect completion.

For students on a research month, there may be restrictions on lab access or initiation of new experiments. You should check with their mentor for guidance

It is possible, just to be clear, that after the two weeks, we will determine that it remains unfeasible for students to return to clinical rotations (a decision made in conjunction with faculty, clerkship directors, and UPMC). We all need to be prepared for how missing more time on rotations will affect timelines to graduation. We want to assure you that the school will do everything possible to be flexible in terms of completion of requirements so students can graduate on time—this might include waiving certain graduation requirements, decreasing the number of required electives, giving credit for alternate experiences, allowing for later clerkships or more time off during interview season, etc.

Step 1

Many MS2s have asked about what will happen with their ability to take Step 1 in the coming weeks. Some Prometric testing centers have closed (including Pittsburgh 3/16-3/31), which has raised anxiety, understandably. As you know, USMLE is closely monitoring the situation and putting updates on their websites (as is Prometric). Unfortunately, no one knows how many closures there will be, and how students will be rescheduled. Some students asked about taking the exam earlier at an open site, to avoid risking a closure—if you are ready to take it and wish to, that’s fine of course. You should discuss these decisions with Laura Jeannerette, who can help you assess based on your specific situation.

If there are closures that affect our students ability to complete the exam as expected, we will revisit the policy that students must take Step 1 prior to starting clerkships. We could, for instance, allow students to start rotations and take Step 1 later when testing centers open. If there isn’t a general closure problem, we may need to make individual decisions for students. Again, our goal is to be as flexible as possible so students can continue expected timelines as best as we can.

Volunteering/Service

Many students have asked about opportunities to help in the crisis, by volunteering or providing service of some kind to the system or community. We’re thrilled and proud to have students willing to pitch in during this difficult time. MS3-4 students can sign up with Dr. Thompson to help out within the system; training will be coming soon for that. Any student can choose, if they wish, to help at any community site, with two caveats: 1) it will not count for CE-Underserved, and 2) the school cannot guarantee your health/safety at any of those sites. It’s up to you.

Again, thanks to you all for your patience and understanding. Let us know if you have any questions or concerns, and don’t forget the guidance on Navigator which has full details.

<https://navigator.medschool.pitt.edu/curriculum>

General Guidance:

- Any student or staff member should consider themselves at risk if they have EITHER:
 - recent exposure to an infected person, OR
 - a fever (Temperature >100.4) and signs of lower respiratory track illness (cough, shortness of breath)
- High risk individuals should stay home and call for medical guidance.

Group	Call...
Students	Student Health 412-383-1800 Nordenberg Hall—Wellness Center (Mon-Sat) https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/about-us/contact/
Staff	Employee Health 412-647-4949 Medical Arts Bldg, 3708 5 th Ave, Suite 505 https://www.hr.pitt.edu/current-employees/work-life-balance/wellness-life/myhealthwork-center

- Exposed individuals who have been screened and cleared for return to work can do so.
- Individuals who are severely ill should go to the emergency room.
- Students and staff are encouraged to avoid exposure to symptomatic individuals or travelers returning from high-risk areas, if possible.
- Some individuals may be at higher risk than others (e.g., immunocompromised, medical conditions, age). We encourage you to have a lower threshold for social distancing to protect yourself and the community. Please consult with your health care provider (or Student Health) if you have questions about your specific situation.
- Our lecture rooms, hallways, and small group rooms in Scaife have hand sanitizers and bathrooms—wash your hands frequently! Avoid touching your face, cover your cough, and practice other routine precautions against infection. Use surface disinfectants frequently (rooms are cleaned daily).
- Practice social distancing routinely—even if you’re not infected or quarantined yourself. This means staying home as much as possible, avoiding crowds unless absolutely necessary, maintaining 6 feet of distance between individuals when you can, not shaking hands, covering coughs, washing hands, etc. You can be a role model for the community and help prevent the spread of infection!
- CDC guidelines will help inform other prevention and treatment strategies, in collaboration with UPMC Infection Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

UPSOM promises to do everything we can to ensure that students are able to get what they need from the curriculum, even during this crisis. We will work so that students aren’t held up in terms of their timeline towards graduation or other milestones. We will individualize this to provide accommodations to those who need it. Everyone needs to be understanding and flexible, recognizing that this is a very unusual situation, and the guidance may change in a short time. Communication is key—in all directions.

Travel Guidance:

- Individuals should avoid **any** travel unless necessary. If international travel is necessary, individuals are expected to register the travel through the [University of Pittsburgh International SOS Travel Registry System](#)
- University advisories must be respected.

Do not travel	China
Non-essential travel discouraged	Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Spain, France

Effective 3/10/20

- Students returning from any country on the advisory list should voluntarily practice social distancing for a period of 14 days. They will be notified by the school who will assist them in arrangements, although they are still allowed to travel in the community as necessary (just not to the Pitt campus).
- Students travelling domestically won't need to socially distance unless they've been exposed to cases or are ill.
- We recommend that students carefully consider their travel plans. If you travel, you should be prepared for changes in re-entry procedures that may affect your plans—make sure you have money, supplies, or other resources in case you are held up or become ill. Depending on the situation, you may not be able to return to the university community.

Curriculum Guidance (MS1-2):

- ALL students will participate in the curriculum remotely effective March 13, 2020.
 - Lectures will be available on podcast (Navigator and Panopto).
 - Patient panels/interviews will be cancelled or postponed.
 - Small groups will be accessed remotely, utilizing Zoom to allow for both audio/video capture. Participation will still be required.
 - Assessments (exams/quizzes) will either be postponed or done from home using Examsoft, depending on the course/assessment. Assessments done at home will be open-book but we ask students to complete the assessments on their own unless otherwise specified.
 - Laboratories or other course requirements/activities will be reconfigured or cancelled.
 - Advanced Physical Exam (APE) and Clinical Procedures (CP) sessions will be postponed and made up later.
 - Students may be asked to complete some activities in the summer to make up lost curriculum.
 - There will be no printed syllabi for Neuroscience or Psychiatry.
 - OMED and course directors will provide more specific details moving forward.
- Research and laboratory work will continue as usual, including the summer research program.

Many MS2s have asked about Step 1 and the closure of testing centers. We do not have any clear information about what will happen, and thus can't offer any real guidance on what you should do. Laura Jeannerette can help you decide if you are considering moving up your exam or finding a different testing center.

Students are encouraged to go home, wherever that is, to stay safe, but of course you will be allowed to remain in the dorm at Darragh, and you can study at Scaife if you wish (the building will still remain open).

Curriculum Guidance (MS3-4):

- Clinical rotations (clerkships/electives) will be suspended from March 17-26, with assessments (including SHELF, OSCE) allowed on March 27 for clerkships where that is relevant. Some remote curriculum may be provided. Most students will get credit for completing the full month; a few may require make-up activities.
- We will follow guidelines from UPMC; students returning from travel or who had exposure will require UPMC clearance before returning to clinical sites—this will be done at MyHealth@Work 412-647-3695, Kaufmann Medical Bldg (3471 5th Ave Suite 1111).
- For students engaging in voluntary social distancing, classroom-based activities (e.g., bootcamp, ILS, Assessment Week) would be postponed or done asynchronously/remotely, depending on the activity.
- Bootcamp/ILS sessions will be delivered remotely, although some simulation/SP sessions and dissections may continue. The CSCS trip to Washington has been cancelled. CCAs, however, will go on as planned.
- All international electives will be put on hold.
- Visiting student rotations and away rotations for MS4s will be cancelled through May; Applications will be processed for rotations in June and later, with the advisement that changes may need to be made.

Staff Guidance:

- Staff should follow guidance from the University of Pittsburgh.
- Individuals engaging in voluntary social distancing may be given the opportunity to work remotely. Human Resources may help in guidance for specific situations.
- Staff deemed “non-essential” will be given every opportunity to work remotely.

Event/Facilities Guidance:

- Most school-sanctioned gatherings are being cancelled/postponed. This includes the large Match Day ceremony with all students, faculty, and families attending.
- If you are sick, you are advised to stay home and contact the school for further instructions.

- If you are not sick but are concerned about attending, it is absolutely fine for you to opt out. Contact the school.
- Scaife Hall will remain open. The library will remain open. Students can use the building to study if you wish. However, we are strongly recommend that you maximize the distance between you and others, to protect yourself and them.

Important websites to monitor:

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Pitt: <https://www.emergency.pitt.edu/covid19>
- Prepare your home: <https://www.wesa.fm/post/guide-how-prepare-your-home-coronavirus>