

Besrouer Center for Global Family Medicine

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Title: Evolving with COVID-19: Pivoting to a new paradigm in medical education

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Context

In the early months of 2020, COVID-19 began as a local respiratory illness that has since spread around the world creating a pandemic that has not been experienced over a century. The rate of infection and its associated morbidity and mortality has led to the need for physical distancing with a profound effect on medical education.

Undergraduate Medical Education

Undergraduate medical educators have had to revise curriculum in order for them to be delivered virtually along with adaptations required for assessments and evaluations. New methods of teaching had to be created to support clinical skills acquisition amid the reduction in the opportunities for traditional bedside teaching. High stakes evaluation and decision around graduation of final year students were challenged and different paths were taken in different countries.

Postgraduate Medical Education

Postgraduate trainees have had to develop their clinical skills while having the added emotional stress caused by COVID-19. As hospitals and health systems rationalize limited health care resources, many elective procedural and surgical cases have been cancelled. Further, more stringent cleaning protocols have reduced the number of clinical encounters daily in clinic. This has led educators to become creative in ensuring that postgraduate trainees are exposed to a sufficiently broad scope of clinical experiences prior to completion of training. Telemedicine training has been a historical curricular debt in many places and has had to be quickly implemented according the widespread needs of patient remote assistance. Residency programs needed to review admission processes strongly affected by social distancing measures.

Continuing Medical Education

Additionally, the rapid emergence of COVID-19 has challenged continuing medical education for providers around the world. In a very short time, family physicians have had to ensure that they were up to date on the latest management protocols for COVID-19 based on information that is ever evolving. Physician organizations have thus identified the need for a mechanism to deliver targeted continuing medical education, such as webinars, in a timely and succinct manner.

Conclusion

As societies work to contain COVID-19, the lasting pivoting effects on medical education will be significant and with innovations that will be required in this new paradigm shift.