

# Transitioning to digital learning: a medical student perspective

Sir,

As final year medical students we read with interest the article by Al Samaraee (<https://doi.org/10.12968/hmed.2020.0191>) regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on medical education. At our medical school, elements of clinical placements have been replaced with digital learning experiences which emulate the learning opportunities usually experienced on a placement. These include Capsule (a case-based question bank), Script (an online prescribing tool), and Speaking Clinically (a library of patient interviews). The content covered in these platforms forms the basis for remote weekly case-based discussions between students and clinical tutors.

We feel that the range of digital learning platforms is key in reproducing the diversity of learning opportunities in clinical practice. Indeed, digital learning mitigates for inequalities in medical education offered across different clinical sites. However, despite the increasing number of digital learning tools available (Roskvist et al, 2020), learning remotely cannot substitute for being an active member of the clinical team which enables medical students to acquire stepwise responsibility for patient care, thereby ensuring natural progression to the role of a junior doctor.

As the article acknowledges, digital learning affords flexibility to students in terms of when and where they study, yet challenges may arise in identifying the degree to which students are engaging with learning materials and those who may be struggling or in need of pastoral care. To combat this, it is important that medical students are actively encouraged by clinicians to contact them when concerns arise, even in the form of remote interaction such as email or Zoom calls. This is of even greater importance as students navigate the additional pressures of medical school in the face of a global pandemic.

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## References

Roskvist R, Eggleton K, Goodyear-Smith F. Provision of e-learning programmes to replace undergraduate medical students' clinical general practice attachments during COVID-19 stand-down. *Educ Primary Care*. 2020;31(4):247–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14739879.2020.1772123>

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