

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on medical education: a student perspective

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Sir,

As medical students we read with great interest the article titled 'The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on medical education' (<https://doi.org/10.12968/hmed.2020.0191>) by Ahmad Al Samaraee. We have just begun our final year of medical school at universities in London and have experienced first-hand the effect that the pandemic has had on students' education.

The article focused mostly on how final year medical students (who are now junior doctors) had been affected by early registration and cancellation of exams. But, in our experience all clinical year students have been significantly affected. Our student-selected modules have been replaced by catchup placements, covering topics which were missed as a result of our being withdrawn from the clinical environment early. While we understand the importance of getting clinical exposure in many specialties, it is disheartening to miss out on exploring an area of interest in more detail and we worry this may hinder our career progress at later stages.

The article mentions that technology has provided many alternative learning opportunities, but these have their limitations. Online lectures through software such as Zoom can result in a lack of collaboration between students (Ferrel and Ryan, 2020). With students completing teaching remotely, discussions that would occur normally in teaching sessions are limited. Furthermore, there may be decreased engagement as students can watch the session whenever they want, rather than in real-time lectures. As students it is difficult to replicate all face-to-face teaching via virtual settings, and online teaching often does not replace practical learning such as clinical skills, clerking patients and bedside teaching. Our medical schools have had to limit these teaching methods to comply with social distancing and ensure patient safety, which we feel may reduce our confidence in dealing with clinical problems when we become junior doctors.

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