May 4, 2020

Statement from ARC-PA regarding COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic situation continues to dominate medical efforts in the United States. Medical providers are struggling across the country although some states have begun reopening procedures.

The ARC-PA has had many email exchanges and understands that institutions and faculty members continue to work to find ways to continue the education of their students during this difficult time. There have been some stellar education plans from programs submitted to the ARC-PA with innovative measures to progress students through the program, while assuring that program-defined competencies are met. Bravo! Faculty are making great strides in this way. The ARC-PA and PAEA will work collaboratively to continue to find alternative pathways to assure excellence in education while maintaining compliance with the standards.

Over the past weeks, there have been some frequently asked questions, so we'd like to address some of those that have come in the past few days.

Some General Information about COVID-19 Submissions

It has come to the attention of the ARC-PA that some programs have concerns about submitting the COVID-19 forms. And a few questions have arisen regarding numbers of submissions:
How many programs have submitted? As of 5/4/2020, the ARC-PA has processed 125 COVID-19 forms. Of these, nine (9) programs were asked to provide additional information before the review was completed. To date, no plans have been "rejected" by the commission.

The Commission is pleased to report that submissions, thus far, have demonstrated that programs are making responsible decisions that indicate understanding of the standards and a focus on quality education that lends to student learning and subsequent success. Kudos to those programs who are maintaining quality education standards at this difficult and unsure time.

It has also come to the attention of the Commission that some programs may be unsure of whether they should or should not submit a COVID-19 report. The first question in the grouping below provides clarification about that concern.

Reporting to the ARC-PA

Q: Are all programs required to complete the COVID-19 change forms? What if we had no changes?

The Commission wants to see plans for programs with substantial changes to the curriculum, teaching modalities, or graduation requirements. If your program has any of these types of changes, please submit the COVID-19 change form, which may be found at: http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation/resources/program-change-forms/ as soon as the program knows what the changes are. Also, please be reminded that it is important for programs to continue submission of changes as outlined in the E-section of the ARC-PA Standards as they occur.

Q: What program changes need to be reported?

COVID-19 reports should be made if the program made any changes to:

    a. length of program (longer or shorter)

    b. curriculum for any cohort

    c. matriculation dates of any cohort

    d. graduation dates

    e. changes to cohorts start or end dates in SCPEs

    f. teaching modalities for any cohort (for example, moving to online teaching use of virtual rotations, etc.)

Q: Our institution plans to make changes to our matriculation date for the next cohort of students. Will we have to wait 6 months to receive ARC-PA approval for this?

Programs are submitting their plans for changes to the ARC-PA and those requests are being expedited. The average time for a response is 1-2 weeks. All change forms are found on the ARC-PA website. http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation/resources/program-change-forms/

Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences (SCPEs) and Student Progression

Some programs have made adjustments to their clinical rotations schedule and posed the following questions:

Q: How much can be done virtually, with simulation or other technology in this time of COVID-19? Can we use online or virtual rotations to meet SCPE requirements instead of direct patient care? What about telemedicine?

- The ARC-PA defines supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs) as: Supervised student encounters with patients that include comprehensive patient assessment and involvement in patient care decision making and which result in a detailed plan for patient management. Programs may use virtual experiences, simulation or other technology to meet some of the program defined learning outcomes for SCPEs, but the **intention remains that SCPEs will include some direct patient care, meet the**

program defined learning outcomes, and be of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare students for the clinical practice of medicine.

- Telemedicine <u>may</u> be used to meet SCPE learning outcomes in some cases but has its limits. For example, a program may be able to use telemedicine to meet SCPE requirements for standards related to patients seeking pre-operative and post-operative care but may not be effective for meeting requirements related to patients seeking intra-operative care.

ARC-PA's response

Q: What is the ARC-PA doing to help programs during the pandemic?
The ARC-PA has been monitoring the COVID-19 situation and is in constant communication with our cross-organization leadership colleagues (AAPA, NCCPA, and PAEA). We will continue to collaborate with PAEA to address issues related to PA education and COVID-19. We will continue to meet to determine potential solutions for assisting programs in understanding the accreditation standards and what flexibility the program may have in delivery of its educational components.

Q: What is the ARC-PA plans for programs that have a scheduled site visit between now and September?
Programs with upcoming site visits will be contacted about the possibility for virtual site visits as an option for keeping programs on their scheduled agenda assignments.

As always, the ARC-PA appreciates the dedication of programs to provide quality PA education. We extend our hope for your safety and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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