



24 March 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Our world is experiencing a pandemic that is causing unprecedented disruptions within our society, as well as within our healthcare system and health workforce. Throughout this evolving public health crisis, Resident Doctors of Canada (RDoC) has witnessed the resiliency of its 10,000+ resident physicians across the country. Your messages have been pouring in, sharing the ways in which you are stepping up, adapting, and preparing to contribute to the clinical fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. This dedication to patient care during an exceptionally challenging time speaks volumes about resident physicians in Canada.

**Last week both the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada announced that they were postponing their certification exams until the fall of 2020.**

Immediately after the CFPC released their announcement, we heard from many of you wondering whether the CFPC was still exploring a June date, as some of you felt the announcement had implied, or if a decision had been made to postpone until the fall. We can confirm that the CFPC's decision has been made to schedule the SAMPs in the fall, with a commitment by the CFPC to provide exact dates in April 2020, and confirmation that the SOOs have been scheduled for October 16-18, 2020.

Within hours of the Royal College announcing their decision to postpone exams to the fall of 2020, we began receiving emails and tracking social media. **Many of the emails we received expressed immense relief about exam postponement, but just as many expressed anxiety, frustration, confusion, and anger.**

When the first announcements about exam postponements were made, many of you shared with us personal stories of how these decisions have affected your fellowships, enhanced skills programs, and career plans, as well as your morale, your family planning decisions, your finances, your interpersonal relationships, your individual sacrifices, your ability to focus on studying while caring for patients in the midst of a pandemic, and your mental health. **Common to every email has been a sense of loss of control over your ability to navigate your way through the most important exams in your life.** Underlying many of the messages we have received has also been an increasing concern about the impending clinical impact this pandemic will have on your family, friends, colleagues, and patients.

When RDoC became aware that consideration was being given to postponing the exams, we began using every channel at our disposal to advocate on your behalf. This means that we have been working hard behind the scenes with all of the examining bodies, the PG Deans, and the licensing authorities. **As every decision has been announced, we have been pushing for contingency plans to be in place.** More importantly, we have been advocating for creative solutions that will ensure competent exam-eligible candidates earn their

certification. **We believe that extraordinary times call for extraordinary solutions, beyond postponement of exams, that will work for you.**

We are aware of online petitions and Facebook groups that have formed to write multiple letters to the national examination bodies with a variety of proposed solutions. Many RDoC Board Members have been asked why RDoC hasn't publicly endorsed these initiatives. I want to assure you that just because we may not endorse one specific initiative does not mean that we haven't already been actively advocating for innovative initiatives to be reviewed, including many of those expressed in circulating letters. From the thousands of residents we have heard from, we have learned that there are many different viewpoints, stories, concerns and ideas on how to move forward. At the same time, we also know that we haven't heard from every single resident. **Keeping in mind the numerous viewpoints expressed by Canada's residents, RDoC is committed to continually advocating for consideration of extraordinary and creative solutions that recognize the years of dedication, commitment, and clinical competence of this year's cohort of residents.** We also recognize that any solution during this pandemic will, in some way, disrupt the personal lives and professional careers of our members, and we will always advocate for solutions that minimize this disruption as much as possible and allow you to enter the workforce.

**To every resident in Canada, I want to let you know that in addition to the work that we have undertaken related to the exam situation, RDoC has also been hard at work preparing for the emerging clinical impact of COVID-19 on your professional lives.** Our partnerships with your provincial representatives (RDBC, PARA, RDoS, PARIM, PARO, MarDocs and PARNL) are essential to ensuring that you are safe at work. Working environments are shifting quickly and, in the past 24 hours, some provincial governments have provided hospitals with exceptional powers to override collective agreements, including agreements that govern the employment of residents. The professional staff of all of our provincial organizations are working together to identify and have plans in place to deal with the work-related issues you might encounter. **Right now, RDoC and your provincial resident associations are also collaborating to develop common approaches to mitigate any impact on your training, including advocating to provincial medical regulatory authorities for full provisional licensure to protect your ability to work during this pandemic, irrespective of exams.**

It is an understatement to say that society at large is stressed. The world is filled with uncertainty and with that uncertainty comes escalating stress - stress that all of us are feeling and witnessing every day. Canadians are looking to place their trust in our healthcare system and, as doctors on the front lines, they will be looking to you for exemplary clinical care, reassurance, and a sense of calm. For those of you who have expressed that you are feeling alone and unsupported, I want to let you know that there is a network of dedicated, sometimes-invisible individuals working diligently in your corner. **There are also voices of solidarity and support emerging from attending physicians, program directors, patients, and other healthcare professionals.**

I am grateful to the volunteer resident leadership across this country, who are remaining focused and solutions-oriented. And I know that all of the resident leaders are very grateful to the staff at RDoC, RDBC, PARA, RDoS, PARIM, PARO MarDocs and PARNL, many of whom have been working around the clock, to make sure that every possible detail is being attended to, so that our voices are heard.

**To everyone who has reached out to us with their own story, or who has reached out to make sure we are aware of and connected to grassroots advocacy initiatives on social media, thank you.** We are listening. We have your back. To those of you who have felt like your voice has not been heard, we are exploring new ways to hear from you, because we believe every resident voice counts.

To date, we have received countless emails to [covid19@residentdoctors.ca](mailto:covid19@residentdoctors.ca) and we have been responding to each one. Please continue to share your different perspectives as we continue to voice your concerns and questions in the coming weeks. **We are collating questions that residents have asked of the Royal College and CFPC regarding examinations, and we will be requesting that they review and formally address these questions in an FAQ.**

On behalf of the RDoC team,

Emily Stewart, MD  
PGY-4 Emergency Medicine  
President, Resident Doctors of Canada

**For previous updates from RDoC on COVID-19 and exams, please see:**

[Update #1](#) on March 11, 2020

[Update #2](#) on March 12, 2020

[Update #3](#) on March 14, 2020

[Update #4](#) on March 18, 2020