The Royal College’s Response to COVID-19 ‘s Impact on Postgraduate Medical Education

June 2020
The world is facing a global pandemic and Canada’s healthcare system is under significant pressure. This will have an impact on our postgraduate medical education (PGME) system, including:

- COVID-19’s impact is being felt differently by each program, specialty, school, and region.
- PGME offices are facing impacts on regular residency training operations. Despite best efforts to maintain the educational mandate of programs, there may be residents and trainees who, due to changes in patient load, redeployment, limitations to clinical activities or personal illness, may miss a portion of the requirements for training.
- Many residents and trainees have committed years to their training. The Royal College and universities are working together to ensure all risks are managed and mitigated.

To ensure success at all levels across the country, the Royal College is working closely with multiple stakeholders, including PGME offices, academic partners, federal and provincial bodies and healthcare partners in identifying and responding to ongoing needs.
The Royal College is providing guidance and support for the following areas which are impacted by COVID-19:

1. Competence by Design Launch
2. Faculty Development
3. National training standards
4. National certifying examinations
5. Postgraduate Accreditation activities
6. CPD and in practice activities
Foundational to the success of this strategy is:

1. A pledge to work transparently with stakeholders to understand needs and co-create solutions.

2. The Royal College working in partnership with schools and programs, including providing support as we all adapt to the new realities of training within this pandemic.

3. A collaborative effort to maintain standards of residency education, with a clear understanding that the Royal College must provide guidance and flexibility within these unprecedented circumstances.

4. Demonstrate that the Royal College has a strategic and coordinated approach in operating throughout this pandemic which encompasses all aspects of postgraduate medical education.
THE APPROACH

**CONNECT.** Open lines of communication to understand front line challenges and best ways to provide ongoing solutions for our stakeholders.

**PLAN.** Use data and feedback to inform decision-making in collaboration with stakeholders.

**SUPPORT.** Provide leadership, guidance and support during a time of crisis.

*Collaboration, support and flexibility*
THE COORDINATION

In collaboration with the postgraduate deans, we are working together to address all impacted areas of residency education.

- Postgraduate medical education in the time of COVID-19
- Faculty Development
- Exams and Certification
- Competence by Design Implementation
- Maintenance of training requirements and standards
- Postgraduate Accreditation

Strategy: COVID-19 Impact on PGME
EXAMS AND CERTIFICATION

The Royal College is working together with PG deans and PGME offices, as well as with federal and provincial authorities and healthcare partners, to produce a four-point plan to deliver exams:

1. Applied exams will not be required for the 2020 cohort.

2. The date for the written exams will be provided a minimum of six weeks in advance.

3. Test sites will be expanded to allow candidates to take the exam closer to home.

4. Fees for the oral exam will be refunded.

LINK TO LATEST EXAM UPDATES
COMPETENCE BY DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION

• We are providing guidance on how to achieve CBD program goals and standards in an environment where assessment and teaching is challenged. This includes regular discussions with PG Deans, specialty committees and CBME leads to find flexible solutions that prioritize the safety of residents and patient care.

• We have realigned workshop schedules for 2021 and beyond to support social distancing. We are working with each specialty to discuss options to ensure their expectations for launch or delay of launch are met.

• We are in consultations with schools and programs to understand and respond to impacts caused by COVID-19 to ensure programs receive support from the Royal College.

• Faculty development support has been prioritized with the creation and distribution of new virtual teaching and learning resources, online learning activities, tools and tip sheets.
Consultations with program directors

- Gathering information from those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to inform decisions relating to the July 2020 launch.

- Designed to get a better national picture of program readiness for launch before proposing next steps.

- Survey answers informed discussions with Specialty Committee Chairs, Postgraduate Deans, and CBME Leads to determine which disciplines would proceed to a 2020 launch.
Disciplines

that will launch CBD as planned

- General Surgery
- Neurology (adult and pediatrics)
- Nuclear Medicine
- Orthopedic Surgery
- Pediatric Cardiology
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Plastic Surgery
- Psychiatry
Disciplines that will defer for one year

\textit{i.e., remain time-based for the 2020-21 academic year}

- \textbf{Adult} Cardiology
- Clinical Immunology and Allergy (adult and pediatrics)
- Neonatal Perinatal Medicine
- Pediatric Surgery
- Respirology (adult and pediatrics)
- Vascular Surgery
Deferred disciplines

Why were some disciplines deferred?
Deferral decisions were driven by a number of unique factors, including:

- Significant disruptions to residency training resulting in setbacks to implementation
- The mental and physical fatigue experienced by our educators, residents and overall healthcare system during this time was a major consideration

Soft-launch option:
For programs eager to start CBD despite the delay, there is the option to soft launch elements of CBD

- Programs will still need to meet time-based requirements for another year
- Encouraged to ‘soft launch’ – i.e., incorporate and pilot elements of their CBD design within their time-based training
Disciplines proceeding to 2020 launch

Why are some able to go ahead?

• Consultations showed that many programs/disciplines had many of the essential ingredients of CBD in place and were ready to proceed

Permissive launch option:

Some launch programs that have been impacted by COVID-19 may benefit from a permissive launch

• The transition to competency-based training during COVID-19 will take time, patience, and flexibility
• A permissive launch builds upon current policies to allow for the phasing in new national standards and training requirements as of July 2020
# Defining a permissive launch

*in light of COVID-19*

| Clear and coherent guide to training | • Link EPAs and key competencies with the training experiences  
• This will help trainees and faculty understand the focus of training, even if it disrupted in light of COVID-19 |
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<td>Phase in CBD requirements</td>
<td>• Focus on the early stages of a residents training (i.e., Transition to Discipline, Foundations) and phase in CBD overtime</td>
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| Some observations are better than none | • Start with observations and coaching, as programs are able  
• During this transition, it is likely acceptable that there will be fewer EPA observations being recorded |
| Reviews of resident progress aren’t needed on Day 1 | • Competence committees do not need to be in place on Day 1  
• Recommend programs ‘soft launch’ their committee (perhaps virtually) by the time residents need to progress to the second stage of training |
| Set up for success with the early use of an electronic portfolio | • Early CBD experiences underlined the importance of having an electronic portfolio to capture observations  
• Strongly recommend the use of an electronic portfolio early on, to avoid challenges integrating one later on. |
The Royal College is working to **modify the faculty development strategy** to provide support and resources that facilitate a flexible delivery of faculty development in virtual and challenged learning environments. This plan includes:

- Launch of a new virtual teaching resources webpage
- Development of new educational resources and tip sheets
- Free access to the CanMEDS Tools Guide
- On-going support for specialty programs preparing to launch Competence by Design or for those who are already operating in a competency-based program
- Launch of a targeted Competence by Design webinar series
- Weekly e-support emails to highlight relevant resources
HOW TO MEET ROYAL COLLEGE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

To help support training programs, we have developed three guides outlining how programs can meet national standards in this disrupted environment:

1. Guide for time-based training programs
2. Guide for competency-based training programs (Competence by Design)
3. Guide for Areas of Focused Competence (AFC) training programs

These resources aim to identify solutions, provide support, and emphasize where there is flexibility for programs, while also upholding national discipline-specific standards.
PRINCIPLES FOR DECISION-MAKING IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

- Safety comes first
- Maintain education activities, where possible
- Graduating residents and trainees must be competent to practice unsupervised
- There is no 'one size fits all' solution
- Patient care takes precedence
- Perfection is not the goal
- COVID-19 redeployment may count towards training requirements
- Documentation is critical
In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, CanRAC met to discuss the impact on accreditation activities. Their current updates include:

- **Regular Accreditation reviews**: Timing of upcoming regular accreditation reviews remains the same; however, the situation is being monitored closely by CanRAC, in consultation with impacted stakeholders.

- **External reviews**: CanRAC is working closely with those who had visits scheduled this spring. For all upcoming visits, CanRAC is developing criteria to determine where a virtual model will be feasible. For any that are postponed, new deadlines and/or adjustments will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

- **Internal Reviews and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)**: Institutions and programs are encouraged to continue CQI activities as much as possible, including mid-cycle internal reviews.

- **Follow-up deadlines**: We are committed to applying as much flexibility as possible, while ensuring the rigour of the accreditation process is maintained.

- **Annual Resident and Faculty Surveys**: Postponed until spring 2021.

- **Committee meetings**: It is anticipated that meetings of the residency accreditation committees will continue; however, meetings will be conducted virtually until it is safe and feasible to consider in-person meetings.
NEXT STEPS: CONTINUED COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT

Consultation with key stakeholders

Collaboration to modify PGME strategies

Distribute guidance documents and resources

Commitment to ongoing regular communications
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

• Clear, agreed upon goals that balance maintaining standards while providing flexibility within an unprecedented environment

• A collaborative effort to maintain standards of residency education, while also providing guidance and flexibility that encompasses all aspects of postgraduate medical education.

• Communications is timely, clear and consistent

• Ensuring system of quality residency education
How we are working with you

Sample of recent activities
Specialty Committee Chairs | 10 Town Halls
*Planning how to support programs experiencing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic*

**March 25 and 27**
- Written exams decision and training experiences

**April 2 and 3**
- Oral exams engagement

**April 7, 8 and 9**
- Exams and training experiences

**April 21**
- Fall oral exams

**May 4 and 5**
- 2020 CBD Readiness Survey results

**Plus:** Two town halls will be held the week of May 11th and two the week of June 1st for Specialty Committee and AFC chairs and program directors to discuss issues related to residency education.
Royal College webinar held April 9 | 459 registrants!

**CBD during the COVID-19 pandemic:**
*Sharing adaptations and strategies*

• Identified common challenges and innovative solutions.

• Guest speakers conducted a positive, solution-oriented discussion with emphasis on support and safety of faculty and residents.

**Participant feedback:**

“Concrete experiences and solutions with diverse perspectives”

“Clear direction and creative strategies were discussed”

“Very useful. Love the idea of sharing academic learning across Canada”

• Issues raised have been collected to inform shared decision-making

LINK TO WEBINAR RECORDING
COVID-19 Impacts Survey | June 2020

Consultations with program directors

- Gathering information from those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to inform decisions relating to postgraduate medical education.

- Designed to get a better national picture of challenges and share innovative solutions across all programs.

- Survey answers will inform discussions with Specialty Committee Chairs, Postgraduate Deans, and CBME Leads to determine how we might assist in supporting programs throughout the pandemic.

COVID-19 Impact Survey
An important consultation with program directors

What are the impacts?
We would like to understand how the COVID-19 situation has impacted your readiness to launch, including motivation, capacity, and specific readiness tasks.

3. For your program and considering the current COVID-19 situation, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

There is adequate local support (program assistant, CRBO lead, assistant program director, etc.) to implement change in my program, and this support is or will be available for launch in July 2020.

Given the current COVID-19 situation, people in my department/division see CRBO implementation as a manageable task by July 2020.

Implementing CRBO by July 2020 is a priority for my program.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

LINK TO SURVEY RESULTS WHEN AVAILABLE
COVID-19 Specialty Program e-SUPPORT

for programs seeking solutions during the pandemic.

FINDING SOLUTIONS
SUPPORT RESOURCES FOR YOU

KEY RESOURCES

COVID-19 Impact on Residency Education

Faculty Development | New Resources and eSupport Email Series

Collaborating with clinician educators for on-the-ground support

11 TIPS for Virtual Learning in COVID-19

In the context of COVID-19 safety concerns, PPE shortages, physical distancing constraints, and altered responsibilities posed challenges to supporting and hosting traditional face-to-face teaching and learning experiences. This resource is intended to help you consider your faculty development and residency education efforts during the pandemic while balancing best practices for virtual learning.

1. Design a virtual learning environment.
2. Use video-based learning.
3. Be mindful about virtual meeting fatigue.
4. Be flexible and patient.
5. Keep your curriculum in mind.
6. Build a sense of community.
7. Stay the same but different.
8. Limit online resources to be relevant.
9. Remind your learners to engage.
10. Prepare for learners who participate.

VIDEO CONFERENCING TOOLS

Which one best meets your needs?

LINK TO RESOURCES
Royal College CBD Webinar Series | Adjusted for COVID-19

Support to 2020 Launch Cohort

WEBINAR 1 | May 19, 2020
Resident Development: A resource for your incoming cohort

Presenter: Adelle R. Atkinson
Share ideas and “tips and tricks” with colleagues across the country about preparing residents for CBD in light of Covid-19.

WEBINAR 2 | June 9, 2020
Introduction to Competence Committees

Presenters: Warren Cheung, Anna Oswald
Define best practices in creating and running a Competence Committee.

• Issues raised are collected to inform shared decision-making