



FACULTY OF PAIN MEDICINE

of the Royal College of Anaesthetists

FPM statement on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on training and wellbeing of our trainees

25 March 2020

In line with our parent College, the Faculty of Pain Medicine of the Royal College of Anaesthetists recognises that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently in uncharted territories. We understand that there is currently disruption to training in pain medicine as a result of Pain Services having to adjust ways of working to maintain patient and staff safety.

At present, we envisage that in light of guidance from Public Health England, most pain services are offering remote consultations via telephone or the internet, and that most pain intervention procedures and group sessions for patients have been put on hold. We recognise that this can pose particular challenges in delivering a biopsychosocial approach to pain medicine by different health professionals in the pain team. We also understand that due to the need to wisely ration personal protection equipment, and therefore for safety reasons, trainees may find it difficult to access accompanied Consultant sessions reviewing patients face to face in an acute or acute on chronic scenario.

Wherever possible, we would encourage trainees at all levels of training in pain medicine to use this time to learn from their Educational Supervisors, how to adapt and still deliver multidisciplinary pain services. This need is still there and indeed may be increased due to distress and morbidity caused by the pandemic.

We also understand that trainees because of exceptional service needs may find themselves being taken off their modules in pain medicine to fill in other roles as required. The Faculty of Pain Medicine understands that at present we must all do our utmost for the good of the National Health Service and our patients and accepts that reallocation may be necessary at this point in time. However, we also encourage Local Pain Medicine Educational Supervisors and Regional Advisors in Pain Medicine to maintain close contact with trainees and ensure that they continue to receive full support both from an educational and pastoral point of view.

In the fullness of time, when the pandemic settles down, we will take into consideration the disruption that it has caused to each individual's training and progress. The Faculty Training and Assessment Committee has always taken the view that training is assessed by competency and not by number of patients managed. We realise that there will be trainees who will be coming to the end of their training during this period. We would like to reassure all trainees that a common sense approach will be taken in assessing competencies and signing off training at all levels and this guidance will be passed on to all Regional Advisors in Pain Medicine. This will be done in coordination with the RCoA who will be requesting that local schools of anaesthesia adopt a flexible approach to the sign off of units of training and progression through core and higher training programmes. The situation is being regularly reviewed and further updates will be provided as required.¹

We encourage trainees to look after themselves and their families, and to keep an eye out for other trainees and colleagues who may not be lucky enough to have close family ties. We realise that these are very difficult times where each and everyone's physical and mental wellbeing may be pushed to the limit. Take time to rest where possible and do seek help for your mental and physical wellbeing if needed.

The joint COVID-19 website developed by the Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine, Intensive Care Society, Royal College of Anaesthetists and Association of Anaesthetists is updated on a daily basis and has excellent information to help each and every one of us: <https://icmanaesthesiacovid-19.org/>

1. COVID-19 Advice for Anaesthetists in Training. <https://icmanaesthesiacovid-19.org/news/advice-for-anaesthetists-in-training>