MESSAGE SENT FROM JULIE BYERLEY, VICE DEAN FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS,

ON MARCH 14, 2020 AT ~2:30 PM ON USE OF PPE AND CLINICAL EDUCATION

Dear Students,

I regret to have to send this to you, but it represents where we are in this public health emergency.

This announcement will come out soon from UNC Health –

While personal protective equipment (PPE) is in very short supply and infectious disease burden is increasing, students on clinical rotations within UNC Health will not be allowed to use Personal Protective Equipment. This means that students will not be allowed to participate in direct patient care of anyone with a condition requiring the use of contact, droplet, or airborne precautions.  Students also will not be allowed in operating rooms where masks are required.  UNC Health has a very strong commitment to the education of the future workforce in the health professions and regrets that we have to make this decision.  It is not made lightly and will be re-evaluated regularly as the supply of PPE is reassessed. Many other measures are also in place to protect the supply of PPE.

This decision further highlights the need for social distancing, good hand washing, and other protective measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Students are allowed to continue in the clinical environment though certainly we recognize that your participation is limited.  We will be especially coordinating with the surgery and OB clerkship directors to consider ways to address the obvious learning issues this forces.  More information will be coming soon.

Student use of PPE is driven by the clinical site in which students work.  It is possible that other facilities have a greater supply of masks, a smaller patient load, or other factors that influence this decision.   For now we are not aware that our educational partners have had to make a similar decision, though that also may change in this evolving situation.

Sincerely,

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