

Dear MPAS Students on (or about to go on) Clinical Rotations:

The university is aware of the developing coronavirus disease 2019 (abbreviated “COVID-19”) situation worldwide and specifically in the United States, as well as in New Hampshire and surrounding states. Please understand that the situation changes rapidly due to the nature of the spread of coronavirus. As of this time, only 7 cases have been confirmed in New Hampshire. We are monitoring the situation closely.

What We Know:

- The epicenters in the U.S. are currently in Seattle, WA and New Rochelle, NY.
- The populations most susceptible to COVID-19 are the elderly and the immunocompromised. Those with comorbid conditions have also been identified as “possibly” more susceptible.
- Children appear to be less affected by COVID-19. Transmission rates to children remain very low worldwide.
- Mortality from COVID-19 increases with age.
- Travel to endemic areas in the world increases the risk of contracting COVID-19.
- We have effective methods to prevent spread of COVID-19; please review the [CDC prevention recommendations](#).

Our students are spread across clinical sites in New Hampshire, Vermont and other states. Per ARC-PA (our accrediting body) it is suggested that “other than limiting direct care of COVID-19 patients, clinical students continue their roles as part of the care team”. To date, none of our clinical sites or preceptors has changed any policies for student rotations. As such, we expect rotations to continue as planned. Know, however, that just as the overall situation with coronavirus is rapidly changing, so, too, may the situation at any given clinical site.

Clinical Year Contingency Planning:

- Seminar Week on the Lebanon campus (from Monday, March 16 through Friday, March 20, 2020) is being transitioned to online (Canvas) format. Your Course Director will communicate with you regarding the specifics of each planned activity.
- The next clinical rotation is scheduled to begin on Monday, March 23, 2020 as planned. If this changes, we will let you know as soon as we can. We cannot say as of today what the next few days will bring. Any plans for delayed or postponed starts will be delivered to you when and if we need to put them into play.
- Students with flu-like symptoms, regardless of travel to endemic areas, must refrain from attending their clinical rotation and seek care with their healthcare provider for influenza and possible COVID-19 testing if clinically indicated. If you have known exposure to COVID-19, do not report to a medical clinic without first calling the clinic. Returning to rotation will likely be allowed with a note of clearance from a healthcare provider.
- We are not currently aware of any clinical year PA students who may be experiencing an immunocompromised condition. If you have not reported this to the department for reasons of confidentiality, we ask you to contact the Program Director immediately so the best plan of action may be implemented to keep you safe.
- Practicing preventive measures and taking precautions while on clinical rotations is paramount. Examples of best practices include: Wear gloves and surgical masks as much as possible. Wash hands frequently. Report exposure to bodily fluids immediately. Utilize approved cleaning agents to clean fomites as needed. Consider changing your clothing before returning home. Follow all OSHA guidelines and regulations. Frequently clean your entire stethoscope with alcohol swabs/wipes.
- Traveling by plane to rotations outside of the state of New Hampshire is discouraged. It is currently prohibited to any U.S. COVID-19 endemic areas.

- PA students are prohibited from coming in contact with or becoming involved in treatment for confirmed COVID-19 affected patients. Contact the clinical rotation Course Directors (Professors DeShaney and/or Penney, as well as PAClinicalYear@franklinperce.edu) immediately should a confirmed case be reported at any of your clinical sites.
- We understand that coming into contact with the COVID-19 exposed “walking well” is extremely difficult to diagnose given a differential diagnosis of influenza, the common cold, and the various upper respiratory infections. The chief complaint of “cough and congestion with fever and malaise” is one of the most common you will encounter during your clinical studies. PA students should heed their preceptors’ recommendations for interviewing and examining patients with these symptoms. We cannot realistically recommend that PA students refrain from interfacing with patients who are suffering from this constellation of symptoms. Practice prevention, review and follow OSHA guidelines, and follow your preceptor’s recommendations for all patient encounters.

What should you do if you have a known exposure to COVID-19?

1. Report your exposure by phone and email to your preceptor and to the PA program (Professors DeShaney or Penney, as well as PAClinicalYear@franklinperce.edu) immediately.
2. Contact your healthcare provider by phone for instructions to seek care.
3. Remove yourself from the healthcare environment and follow prevention protocols to prevent spread of the virus to your own home and community.
4. Prioritize your health and focus on recovery.

What happens in the event you are not able to complete a clinical rotation?

Per ARC-PA standards, waiving clinical rotation hours is not acceptable. Any time missed from a clinical rotation will have to be made up. Given the ongoing nature of the PA program, with no extended breaks during the clinical year, this will most likely result in graduation time being extended to allow for completion of all missed rotations.

Please remain positive, calm, and rational through the next few weeks. We need to remember that we chose a career in healthcare, so we will always be at some degree of risk. This is the nature of our life’s work. We must focus on practicing prevention and making evidence-based decisions. Please check your FPU email daily and pay close attention to unknown numbers on your phone as we may be calling to address issues with upcoming rotations.

Sincerely,
The Franklin Pierce University MPAS Team