

CONFÉRENCE DES DOYENS DES FACULTÉS DE MÉDECINE DU QUÉBEC

Montréal, March 30, 2020

To all clinician teachers in Québec's faculties of medicine:

Subject: Message from the Fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec regarding the suspension of remuneration for teaching provided by specialist doctors

Dear colleagues,

Like you, we have just been apprised of the message the Fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec (FMSQ) has sent to its members informing them that: "As of March 23, teaching activities will not be remunerated." The Federation has notified its members that, "The FMSQ and the Minister of Health have determined that medical staff must be mobilized to respond to the pandemic; theoretical instruction cannot continue in this context."

As you can imagine, this short-sighted directive has taken faculty leadership, who were not at any point consulted before this announcement, off guard. Note too that this directive does not in any way concern remuneration that is provided by faculties of medicine, including remuneration for pre-clerkship instruction, which was quickly shifted to a remote delivery when the pandemic started, and instruction within clerkship and residency programs, which is already financed by faculties. This directive also does not apply to remuneration for direct supervision of clinical clerks or residents working at patients' bedsides. In a pandemic situation, a variety of learning activities are required to train our learners adequately and enable them to complete their training.

Our faculties of medicine are now working to organize learning experiences apart from regular rotations to ensure that the current cohort of students and residents can graduate and be of service to the population and the healthcare system as soon as possible. Given the scale of the current public health crisis, this is crucial. **This is what the Government of Québec is asking us to do in response to the pandemic. We are committed to respond to this directive.**

In the face of this health crisis, teaching is of crucial importance and must be supported – intensified, even. Québec, with the rest of the world, is facing a new disease, and our students must learn how to respond to it. We have to educate them about its various presentations, circulatory support measures, the use of ventilators, possible treatments and the preventive measures that they themselves, their colleagues, healthcare teams and close ones need to follow. At the end of their shift, clinician teachers who care for patients may be able to provide remote instruction to students without any risk to their safety and without affecting care delivery.

On March 24, 2020, the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Yvan Gendron, reminded the directors-general of our health institutions of the importance of education: "In the current situation, we

are concerned about helping the next cohort of health and social services students graduate in a timely manner to ensure that we will have an available workforce... Health and social services trainees have an important contribution to make to our healthcare systems as we face this crisis.” In order for our upcoming cohorts to train and graduate in a timely fashion, they have to receive instruction.

Limiting remuneration and restricting the education offered in our health network when teaching is controlled by university program directors who understand the limitations the pandemic has imposed and for whom patient care is the primary concern, is ill-advised. Furthermore, universities have been working in good faith, in cooperation with the MSSS and the MEES, to manage the situation. Limiting the educational experience can only result in negative consequences – for our students’ advancement towards graduation and for the management of this health crisis. Education does not compromise healthcare. It reinforces it.

Putting a stop to teaching would have a major impact on students’ progress and their timely graduation. It would mean that cohorts who have been held back would find themselves with our regular cohorts in the same rotations and the same training sites, which are already running at capacity. All the instruction that we can offer now will give us an advantage that will help prevent a second health challenge: a healthcare system unable to count on the support of a new cohort of health professionals.

For these reasons, the message conveyed by the FMSQ – which contradicts the directives provided by the government and the *Ministre de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur* – must be considered very carefully. For the good of Québec, educational activities must continue, both to help curb the COVID-19 pandemic in the short term and to ensure that the cohort of doctors we are training can bring all their professionalism to bear in their future roles, when expected.

To mitigate the impact of this directive as much as possible, we are now actively engaged in talks with the FMSQ. You will be kept informed of the outcome of these discussions.

Hoping you can support our efforts and with our sincere regards,

Dr. Hélène Boisjoly
Dean
Faculty of Medicine
Université de Montréal

Dr. Dominique Dorion
Dean
Faculty of Medicine
Université de Sherbrooke

President of the Conference of the Deans of the
Faculty of Medicine of Québec

Dr. David Eidelman
Vice-Principal (Health Affairs) and Dean,
Faculty of Medicine
McGill University

Dr. Julien Poitras
Dean
Faculty of Medicine
Université Laval

President of the Conference of the Vice Deans of
Postgraduate Medical Education in the Faculties
of Medicine of Québec

Dr. Armand Aalamian
Associate Dean
Postgraduate Medical Education
Faculty of Medicine
McGill University

President of the Conference of Vice Deans of
Undergraduate Medical Education in the
Faculties of Medicine of Québec

Dr. Geneviève Grégoire
Vice Dean
Undergraduate Medical Education
Faculty of Medicine
Université de Montréal