To the Editor: In March 2020, medical students were pulled from clinical rotations in response to COVID-19. Although medical education was significantly impacted throughout the United States, each school enacted a unique COVID-19 pandemic response. Nearly three-quarters of students agree that their education was significantly disrupted, with a majority of students reporting that the pandemic interfered with their ability to develop skills needed for residency. These changes and their impact on the upcoming residency application cycle weigh on us and our peers as we consider our future careers.

At our institution, existing plans for clinical rotations were heavily modified. With United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 testing center closures and widespread appointment cancellations, our administration lifted the requirement to test before beginning our third year. Curriculum leaders placed students into compressed 4-week clerkships scheduled on a monthly rolling basis to accommodate decreased clinical capacity. Thus, each student had a unique timeline for taking their first board exam and completing required clerkships.

These scheduling heroics and structural changes supported the continuation of our clinical education. However, the consequences uniquely impacted each student. One peer had their USMLE Step 1 exam rescheduled weeks earlier than anticipated due to test center availability. Now they question their candidacy for a competitive specialty because of a suboptimal score. Another peer started learning neuroanatomy by cadaveric dissection. Med Teach. 2020;42:896–901. doi:10.1002/ca.23640.

Funding/Support: None reported.

Other disclosures: None reported.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to acknowledge Dr. Donna Elliott and Rebecca Long for their thoughtful contributions to the writing process.

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References