

## Introduction

**Background:** Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on pre-medical experience may include:

- University/research lab closures
- Transition to virtual undergraduate lectures<sup>1</sup>
- Reduced clinical exposure through volunteering and shadowing opportunities<sup>1,2</sup>
- Delays in medical school applications<sup>2</sup>

**Anticipated outcome:** Themes regarding the quality of virtual learning, long-term impact on medical education, and difficulty establishing social and professional connections will be identified.

## Aims and Objectives

**Aim:** Identify the core concerns of pre-medical students regarding applying to medical school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Objective:** To qualitatively evaluate posts made on [www.studentdoctor.net](http://www.studentdoctor.net) medical school admission threads for 2 MD- 1 private, 1 public- medical schools located in the East, Midwest, West, and South of the country for a total of 8 medical schools compared.

## Methods

Randomized selection of 8 medical schools, 4 public and 4 private, across four geographic regions to maintain rigor of study

Generation of initial codes from a data set of 6953 posts from March-December of 2019 and 2020 for the selected schools

Inductive coding approach utilized to identify common and unique themes regarding pre-medical student concerns during 2020-2021 admission cycle

Figure 1. Methods utilized to complete thematic analysis

- Sample size selected to provide adequate variety of responses needed to achieve study goal<sup>3</sup>
- Standard thematic analysis process was conducted<sup>4</sup>

## Results



Figure 2. Themes identified by qualitative review of data. Quotes deemed representative of commonly expressed sentiments across multiple medical school admissions forums are included as examples related to the theme of the same color.

## Conclusions

- In contrast to initial expectations, concerns regarding a shift to virtual learning, social and professional dynamics, and long-term impact of the pandemic on medical education were not found in the studied forums.
- Delayed application submission and decision timelines were the greatest concerns regarding pandemic effects
- Concerns regarding a lack of clear directives and definitive timelines with respect to admission decisions, individual school application policies, and medical school curriculum changes were present in all forums
- A decrease in core concerns regarding cost and coordination of interviews was noted from 2019 to 2020 as interviews shifted to an online format, negating the need for transportation, hotel costs, and coordination of multiple interviews in the same geographic region.

**Limitations:** The topic of COVID-19 and associated changes was not as prevalent in medical school admissions forums as expected, leading to a small data set relevant to this issue. The population electing to post on [www.studentdoctor.net](http://www.studentdoctor.net) may not be representative of the medical school applicant population as a whole.

**Applications:** Data collected from these public forums could better prepare medical school administrations to address student concerns when implementing curriculum changes or altering admissions processes in the future. The reduction in concerns regarding cost and coordination with virtual interviews may be relevant in future interview format decisions by admissions staff.

Medical student concerns regarding applying to medical school during the COVID-19 pandemic were centered around changes to the application process, curriculum changes, and cost of attendance.

## References

1. Darren, I. and Vincent, G., 2020. Effects of COVID-19 on healthcare practice, medical education, and pre-medical educational experiences. *Journal of Public Health and Epidemiology*, 12(3), pp.186-192.
2. Rohr-Kirchgraber, T., Jacob, R., Patel, J. and Singh, N., 2021. The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Effect on the Premedical Student. *The Advisor*, 41(3).
3. Boddy, C., 2016. Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 19(4), pp.426-432.
4. Kiger, M. and Varpio, L., 2020. Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), pp.846-854.

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