



If You Can't Stand the Heat, Get out of the Kitchen: Considerations for Medical Student Participation in Care During a Global Pandemic

BROOKE GANTMAN 

**Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article*

**PUBLISHED
ABSTRACT**



ABSTRACT

Though SARS-CoV-2 is a novel virus, the concept of life-altering pandemics is not. This presentation discusses ethical issues with medical student participation in delivery of care during a global pandemic, and urges that medical students should continue to be an integral part of the healthcare team, allowing for development of the knowledge and skills necessary to progress through their medical education.

Medical students have historically been on the front lines of medicine during previous pandemics, and COVID-19 is no different. Students are an integral part of the healthcare team and their removal would disrupt workflow and patient care. Additionally, withdrawing students from clinical experience in the name of their protection vastly hinders their education and professional development. There is already a physician shortage, and there is a reasonable risk that the number of physicians will be further reduced due to burnout, illness, or death from the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, restricting student education could prevent the entry of new physicians in later years when the physician shortage may be even more severe.

Critics argue that pulling from a pool of medical students during a pandemic results in patients receiving a lower quality of care compared to trained professionals. Additionally, many students argue that they should not be required to work in COVID-19 wards while paying tuition and not receiving the same hazard pay or other benefits offered to health professionals. They argue the risks outweigh their obligations.

Students will not be able to continue to learn if they are not willing to expose themselves to risks inherent in medicine. Though they should not be required to treat COVID-19 positive patients, they must fulfill their role as members of the health care team for the public good. It is vital that medical students—who started their career in medicine out of a desire to help others—be willing to accept some personal risk in order to provide care to their community and prevent future physician shortages.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Brooke Gantman

University of Nevada, Reno
School of Medicine, US

bgantman@med.unr.edu

KEYWORDS:

ethics; medical education;
COVID-19; pandemic; student

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Gantman B. If You Can't Stand the Heat, Get out of the Kitchen: Considerations for Medical Student Participation in Care During a Global Pandemic. *ISMMS Journal of Science and Medicine*. 2021; 1(1): 19, pp. 1–2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29024/ijsm.45>

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATION

Brooke Gantman  orcid.org/0000-0001-7159-4617
University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine, US

Gantman
*SMMS Journal of Science
and Medicine*
DOI: 10.29024/ijsm.45

2

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Gantman B. If You Can't Stand the Heat, Get out of the Kitchen: Considerations for Medical Student Participation in Care During a Global Pandemic. *ISMMS Journal of Science and Medicine*. 2021; 1(1): 19, pp. 1–2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29024/ijsm.45>

Submitted: 21 January 2021

Accepted: 21 January 2021

Published: 05 February 2021

COPYRIGHT:

© 2021 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

ISMMS Journal of Science and Medicine is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Levy Library Press.