

Orthopedic Trainees' Perspective on Coronavirus Disease 2019

Sir,

Over the last few months, we were called as orthopedic trainees to help with frontline intensive care units (ICUs) during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. While we were in duty, the published letter by Al-Mohrej and Aldakhil has touched us deeply.^[1]

It is no doubt that uncertainties have emerged about the training programs, promotion examinations, fellowship interviews, and final examination outcomes for all trainees, but maybe more for those in the last year of their surgical training. The same changes and uncertainties are facing the foundation physicians willing to pursue orthopedics with recruitment, examinations, and clinical experience all exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, change comes with difficulties, and with the support from the government, through healthcare services, all will be okay, but only when we all embrace the changes.

Already, we are facing changes and challenges in the profession. Some of the trainees have been redeployed to specialties that they would have never imagined, and even they were uncomfortable with like the frontline testing and admission for COVID-19 patients and dealing with respirators in the ICU. Others have fallen sick, anxious, worried about themselves and their families, and about their training. However, as trainees, some are supporting and fighting for our plight. At least, every change though it is good for us to protect ourselves and loved ones from this pandemic, which is surrounded by uncertainties from day 1, every change carries certain risks in it.

It is saddening that in the face of this crisis, there are apparent attempts of putting our fears, emotions, and needs before the medical oath. Even as orthopedic surgeons, we are entitled to be considered as people with feelings. On the flip side, it is imperative to acknowledge these fears, emotions, and needs and commit to our purpose by not losing focus on patients. This pandemic must also teach us to lay beforehand that although the pandemic is part of our global professional experience, witnessed by all and sundry, we ought to have learned that at first, we are doctors and, at the very second, orthopedic trainees. Doctors owe a purpose to safeguard and protect the life of patients while at the same time balancing with their health, those of their families, and friends. Every decision we have had to make is for the societal well-being and not only for the profession.

Therefore, for trainees and all physicians, we need to reconsider that with the troubled times, all that is important is support to each other. We need to work as a team, "together we

are stronger, together we can make a difference, and together we can make an impact." A change in attitude and perspective is inevitable, and we should consider that this pandemic is an opportunity to learn new skills that we would never have learned otherwise. The beauty and the scariness of the situation are that we the trainees are learning at the same time as our mentors. How we approach the profession is also changing with the pandemic because we have recognized that without us, there will be no one to care for patients who could be us or our beloved ones.

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1. Al-Mohrej OA, Aldakhil SS. Letter to Editor: Editorial: Postcards from war zones-personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Clin Orthop Relat Res 2020. DOI: 10.1097/corr.0000000000001385.

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