

**Statement of the
International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)
71th Session of WHO Europe Regional Committee
Agenda item 3 - The impact of COVID-19 on Medical Education: Getting Ready for the
next Pandemic**

Honourable Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

We, the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, would like to raise awareness on how the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the medical education of your future doctors.

Initial phases saw the withdrawal of “non-essential” staff including learners from health services and mandatory and voluntary reassignment to undertake care roles¹. Youth and in particular medical students have played an essential role in pandemic response. The consequence being a decreased amount of hospital training hours and therefore reduced clinical capacity and clinical skills of the students².

We call on all Member States to work together with their Medical Schools and Academic Institutions to reestablish patient involvement in the curricula in all years of studies. Additionally they should define the role of students in pandemic response and ensure adequate compensation and the continuation of a high quality medical training.

The replacement of in-person classes with online equivalents strongly impacts the learning experience gained by interaction with patients, fellow students and lecturers³ with a potential for detrimental impact. We call on Member States to include students' perspectives in decisions on how to move forward in medical education, thus ensuring not only a return to previous educational standards, but also a compensation of any incurred deficits.

Lastly we would like to highlight the severe impact on the mental health of students, affecting our efficiency and capacity to learn⁴. We call upon Member States to provide accessible, confidential and effective mental health support services for all students.

Thank you.

¹ Macdougall C, Dangerfield P, Katz D, Strain W, 2020, 'The impact of COVID-19 on Medical education and Medical Students. How and when can they return to placements?', *MedEdPublish*, 9, [1], 159, <https://doi.org/10.15694/mep.2020.000159.1>

² IFMSA Report on the Impact of CoVID-19 on Medical Education worldwide:

https://issuu.com/ifmsa/docs/ifmsa_report_of_the_impact_of_covid19_on_medical_e

³ Ferrel MN, Ryan JJ. The Impact of COVID-19 on Medical Education. *Cureus*. 2020;12(3):e7492. Published 2020 Mar 31. doi:10.7759/cureus.7492

⁴ swimsa Switzerland Statement on the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the graduating students of 2021: https://swimsa.ch/download/2733/EB_20210516_Stellungnahme_Staatsexamen_2021_D.pdf

