



What does Med School during COVID-19 look like?

SARAH KEYES [MED 1]

This is a question that even I am still figuring out. I'm a **first-year medical student at UBC**, meaning I'm only 2.5 months into what is to be a very long journey. Here are some of my insights so far.

My new normal

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the **first and second-years' curriculum at the UBC medical school is primarily online**. This includes most of our lectures, labs, and small-group sessions, although our family practice rotations and a few essential hands-on seminars are held in-person. Of the online sessions, around **one-half are synchronous via Zoom while the other is asynchronous**.

Most mornings, I am up at around 7 am to have enough time to drink my two obligatory coffees before getting ready for my **8 am Zoom sessions**. After two hours of class, I stretch my legs before sitting back down for another few hours of lectures. I always enjoy the **full hour for my lunch break as a small way to ward off burnout**, an excellent piece of advice I received from a previous supervisor. After lunch, we either have more lectures, family practice seminars, communication skills, or labs **until around 5 pm each day**. Once it hits 5 pm, I'm out of my office, either for a walk, a coffee, or a chat with a friend. Because I now spent a large part of my days at home in front of my desk, the break and change of scenery are imperative for me to maintain my mental health. After dinner, I'm usually back at my desk for another **few hours of homework until I call it quits at about 9 or 10 pm**. The last hour or two of my day is spent winding down with my family and drinking tea. I'm a person who's big on sleep, and this is something I don't compromise. After a long week, I always sleep in and enjoy the weekend. This means more going out (I love a good bike ride around the sea wall) and seeing my bubble of friends before reviewing the week and preparing for the next.



Something I looked forward to in medical school was the **opportunity to get involved**. This has been tricky, with intermurals temporarily suspended and many clubs having to change the way they do things. However, I've been fortunate to find wonderful platforms such as the **Medical Mentor Community that allow me to get involved while working remotely**. And this is the silver lining – **we now have greater control and flexibility over our schedules** (not to mention the amount of time saved from travelling to and from school each day). Time is our most valuable resource, especially as medical students.

Some of the biggest challenges I've faced while starting medical school are feelings of isolation from my class and struggles to adapt to online learning. This isn't how I or many of my friends imagined how starting medical school would look like. It's difficult to feel like you're getting to know your classmates when you've only met the majority over Zoom. There aren't the same crackles of excitement running through the air when you spend the day learning by yourself at home.

With that said, I cannot stress enough that my **experience in medical school has been amazing** and I am incredibly grateful to be where I am. I've been so impressed and reassured by the sheer **amount of kindness and support I've seen from my peers and the faculty**. It's a difficult time. Everyone is doing their best, and it shows.

A word to the wise

To those of you nervous about starting medical school during a pandemic, I completely understand your concerns. The transition into medical school is scary enough without the added stress and uncertainty of these times. **Keep in mind how hard you have worked and the reasons you have for going down the wonderful path of medicine**. Importantly, **be kind and patient with yourself**. Trust that your future colleagues and faculty have your best interests at heart, and they all want you to succeed. And finally, **remember that this too shall pass**.

