

The Sars-CoV-2 Pandemic's Impact on USMLE Testing: Student Perspectives

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United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) scores are critical to medical students' residency applications in the United States. During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic, the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) and Prometric, the company which provides testing centers, took 62 days to release a plan for delayed examinations. We aimed to determine student satisfaction with this response to the pandemic, and opinions regarding how examinations could have been better adjusted during the pandemic and can be modified in the future.

Medical students (n=570) from 21 medical schools submitted our survey. We analyzed 483 responses based on a survey completion threshold of 50%.

Five percent (25) of students (n=456) felt the NBME adequately responded to the pandemic. Seventy-three percent (350) of students (n=478) "strongly disagreed" that Prometric provided adequate service during the pandemic. Students described distrust of these entities, and negative mental health consequences. After delays, 69% (326) of students (n=476) felt "very stressed" about USMLE examinations, compared to 3% (15) at baseline. 67% (323) of students felt scheduling delays impacted exam performance "negatively" or "very negatively." Ninety-two percent (420) of students (n=456) felt that medical schools should have administered USMLE examinations earlier in the pandemic; 92% (419) of students (n=455) felt schools should administer them long-term.

Given the impact that delayed exam rescheduling had on students, the NBME must examine USMLE administration logistics, including reevaluating Prometric's contract, testing at

medical schools, and avenues for medical students to be active stakeholders in standardized board examination administration. US Medical educators may offer additional support to students affected by these events.