Action Plan for General Pathology

Below are listed specific items the MEC noted in its recent review of our course. Specific plans are indicated for each of the topics. Where it is appropriate, these actions, changes and modifications will be completed by the end of this calendar year.

- The number of course objectives needs to be reduced; some objectives need to be rewritten/combined, and formatting issues/typos on Canvas need to be corrected
  - Amanda Albright is an Instructional Designer at Geisel and may be able to help with wording, combining, consolidating of the course objectives.

PLAN: Ms. Gagnon and I will be reviewing the course objectives over the next month. Our goal is to reduce them by one third and where appropriate combine them. The list of course objectives on Canvas represents an older list of objectives that was transposed to Canvas evidently prior to our correcting the typos, etc., in Ilios. We will make the corrections and post the revised list of objectives on Canvas before the end of this year.

- There is a significant amount of unplanned redundancy in the course. The course director should meet with other Y1 course directors in the Immunology, Biochemistry and Microbiology courses to remedy this; alternatively topics could be removed from the course. As the curriculum reorganization moves forward, there is potential to integrate the content of this course into other courses rather than having a separate course
  - Course Directors:
    - Immunology – David.W.Mullins@dartmouth.edu
    - Biochemistry – Lawrence.C.Myers@dartmouth.edu (Genetics) Charles.K.Barlowe@dartmouth.edu (Metabolism)
    - Microbiology – Paula.R.Sundstrom@dartmouth.edu

PLAN: I have contacted all four of these course directors with a request that we meet in the next few weeks to review potential areas of unnecessary repetition. While some repetition on certain topics is needed, there may be areas where it is unintended and nor important. We will identify these areas. It may be necessary to get the input of the MEC to determine which course is preferable for the presentation of the overlapping material. Once this has been resolved, adjustments will be made to our General Pathology course for the spring of 2016.
• The course needs to reduce the number of lectures in the course. The current percentage does not meet the Geisel policy on Active Learning/Lecture Time or LCME recommendations.
  • 50% or less lecture based programming
  • Amanda Albright can also help problem solve

PLAN: We will reduce the number of lectures to get under the 50% lecture content for the 2016 iteration of the course. This will be done in two ways: elimination of certain lectures and changing the mechanism for teaching the material. This will have to be planned and the schedules modified in December 2015 and January 2016. To do this in a thoughtful manner, we will have to know where redundant material is being eliminated, where unnecessary material can be eliminated, and what residual material lends itself to other instructional formats. It will take time to achieve this restructuring.

• The course should reevaluate its use of small group conferences; if conferences are used for lectures, there is no purpose in bringing students together in a small group
  • Amanda Albright can also help problem solve

PLAN: As was discussed at the MEC meeting reviewing General Pathology, we believe these small group sessions are important. It lets us present complex and fundamental concepts and the vocabulary of pathophysiology in an interactive manner. These are not intended to be lectures and they are not viewed as lectures by many students. This point will be reviewed with the small group leaders to ensure the format is not one that could be construed as lectures. The small group sessions attempt to get interaction from the students. We will insert more questions requiring student response and exercises requiring the students to employ and demonstrate their understanding of the topics being discussed. These changes will be incorporated in the course in spring 2016.

• The course needs to remedy the fact that 8 course objectives are not assessed (either remove them, or assess them)
  • Amanda Albright again or the Office for Faculty Development has materials regarding Assessment methods.

Plan: This will be done following the review of the course objectives.

• In addition to removing redundancy, the course should consider reorganizing the content to correlate better with the Microbiology course and have a more cohesive flow
• Meet w. Microbiology Course director to align topics  
  Paula.R.Sundstrom@dartmouth.edu

PLAN: This parallel material will be reviewed with Drs. Sundstrom and Schwartzman. The position of “Infectious Diseases” in the flow of the Pathology curriculum is logical as the concepts they elucidate require what has been previously taught in prior sections. It may be possible to modify schedules between the two courses so there is more synergy. This will have to be examined and alterations made, if possible.

• The course needs to remove all quiz and exam questions that use negative stems  
  • Amanda Albright can help with this

PLAN: Our test questions are being reviewed in light of the transition of the individual questions into the ExamSoft. During this transferal, all questions with negative stems will be reworked. All of our exam questions will be in USMLE format, if a multiple choice question. Short answer and fill in the blank type questions will be retained. Our “Slide Quiz” questions will remain in the short answer format. These latter questions are keyed to specific histological images to which they are linked.

• The course should remedy the various “offensive materials/remarks” mentioned in the course evaluation. For particularly graphic content, an advance warning would be appreciated by students  
  • Graphic Content – a disclaimer can be added to the schedule posted to CANVAS  
  • Offensive materials/remarks – not sure what you would like to do about that (ie. sensitivity training, policy statement for your faculty, “address on case by case”)

PLAN: The lectures with purportedly “offensive” or disturbing images have been noted by very few students. One of these lectures is Forensic Pathology taught by the State’s Chief Medical Examiner. It is likely these lectures will be eliminated from the course. It is ironic that these lectures are the ones which are most highly rated by students – in their numerical scores and written comments – year after year. Yet, it is not a required part of the medical student curriculum.

The problem of “offensive remarks”, and what constitute such, is highly complex. Issues of intent, context, appropriateness, and pedagogical importance all must be assessed when determining is something is offensive. As course director I do propose to deal with it on a case-by-case basis. If there are disagreements, then the issue would be discussed with Senior Associate Dean for Education as well.
Some additional minor recommendations that would increase student satisfaction:

• The course should consider providing guidance to students regarding access to Netpath (e.g. perhaps IT staff could draft a tutorial for the syllabus to explain how to use the VPN to get off-campus access)
  • Amanda Albright can help with this too.

**PLAN:** We will see if it is possible to produce better access to Netpath. It is a technical issue, and is most probably solvable.

• The course should have a contingency plan for when lecturers/small group facilitators cannot make it; at a minimum there should be some communication to the class about the situation
  • Email notifications to be sent to students as timely as possible
  • Develop a call tree system where the small group facilitator has the phone number of 1 student who is called when the facilitator is unable to make it, that student then notifies classmates
  • Utilize first year support staff (ie. Carrie Hertel) as the contact person for facilitators to contact if unable to make it to small group session.

**PLAN:** This issue will be taken under advisement. Such events are rare and hence unanticipated. I will discuss with our faculty what might best work. There are multiple options which could be effective.

• Students would greatly appreciate the use of normal images in the laboratory to compare to the pathological images (i.e. a reminder of the normal structure would help them see the differences in the pathological state)
  • Sarah Freemantle offered to share slides from CTO for this, use of same/similar slides will reinforce “normal” for students

**PLAN:** This is easy to accommodate via some mechanism. We will ensure that students have access to “normal histology” images for comparison. However, it is not the intent of General Pathology to reteach the histology component of CTO.