

PCS Recommendations for the Management of Elective Surgeries

Philippine College of Surgeons

The increasing number of COVID-19 cases puts the Philippines under Code Red Sublevel 2, WHO also declared #COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

It is our duty and obligation as Filipino surgeons to act as leaders in this time of crisis. We understand the need of our patients expecting urgent attention and surgery. However, the following actions may be necessary for a limited period of time to help in the implementation of the regulations set forth by the IATF. The Memorandum given out today from Malacañan contains emergency but temporary directives intended to address the spread of COVID-19.

Pursuant to these directives and guidelines formulated by the IATF, the Philippine College of Surgeons (PCS) is recommending the following, based on careful review of the prevailing situation in the country:

1. Minimize all elective and urgent procedures, including cancellation of already scheduled surgeries and all other procedures such as endoscopy or interventional procedures for the next 15 days (March 15 to March 30, 2020).
2. Limit the use of laboratories and diagnostic work-ups for only those truly essential in the management of patients.
3. Coordinate with your respective institutions and thoroughly review your own processes and directives to ensure safe and effective care for all patients, while protecting our frontline healthcare workers at all times.

These prudent measures will help minimize foot traffic; allow community quarantine; conserve essential medical supplies and equipment; and minimize risk to patients,

their caretakers and healthcare frontliners from possible exposure to COVID-19.

Specific Settings

Outpatient Care

1. Minimize clinic hours and days.
2. Re-schedule non-urgent visits.
3. Utilize technology and resort to Telehealth for post-operative follow-up and surveillance not requiring in-person consults.
4. For those requiring clinic visits, stringent screening should be done prior to any visits.

Inpatient Care

1. Re-schedule all elective surgeries and related procedures for the next 15 days (March 15-30, 2020).
2. Limit caretakers and visitors.
3. Wear proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when looking after your patients.

We also implore our authorities to consider the following important measure:

1. Make our specialty hospitals like the PHC, NKTI and PCMC COVID free zones. We need these centers to continue caring for our special sets of patients most vulnerable to, but currently free from the virus.
2. Identify centers that may be designated as COVID-19 centers; provide them with properly equipped and protected health personnel.
3. Identify centers that maybe designated as NON-COVID-19 centers to provide acute and urgent care to non-COVID-19 patients who equally need the medical and surgical attention during this time of crisis.