Colorado Society of Anesthesiologists COVID-19 Practice Advisory Statement

18 March 2020

The Colorado Society of Anesthesiologists (CSA) represents the more than 800 physician anesthesiologists throughout the State of Colorado. The following recommendations have been formulated to be in alignment with statements from the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA), the Anesthesia Patient Safety Foundation (APSF), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). CSA recommends the following to address patient and health care worker needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CSA, ASA, and APSF support the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/guidance-hcf.html) for healthcare facilities in areas with growing incidence of COVID-19 to reduce non-urgent surgical, diagnostic, and interventional procedures. This is a patient-centered approach, tempered with public health principles and in accordance with government directives regarding social distancing and protection of vulnerable populations.

- Non-urgent procedures should be rescheduled to a date when community transmission is under greater control, probably for a period of 4-8 weeks or more. Urgency of procedures exists along a continuum and those not time-critical (where a delay would not increase patient morbidity/mortality, affect long-term outcome, or cause undue hardship) should be postponed.
- Time-critical procedures must be prioritized according to patient need and the resources available in the facility where the procedure will be conducted.
- All patient-facing staff must have available to them, and be trained on, the recommended Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when providing patient care. This includes mask, eye protection (goggles or face shield), and gloves for all patients for all invasive procedures likely to generate aerosols (i.e., intubation). For patients who are diagnosed or under investigation for COVID-19, this includes N95 masks, eye protection/PAPR/CAPR for all invasive procedures (i.e., intubation), along with gloves/gowns/boots.

We make these recommendations with the following goals in mind:

- To protect patients, the general population, and health care workers from the unnecessary exposure and transmission of COVID-19 that may be associated with procedures that could be safely postponed.
- To give health care professionals time to develop expertise with the additional protective equipment and practices required to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- To preserve the limited supply of protective equipment that will be needed as demand increases.

COVID-19 guidelines from the CDC and the State of Colorado rightly describe that patients over the age of 60 and especially those over 80, and patients with serious chronic medical conditions,
are at the HIGHEST risk. Therefore, CSA recommends that surgeons, anesthesiologists, and hospitals consider these groups first when deciding to postpone surgeries that could safely be performed at a later time.

CSA encourages physicians, hospitals, and the public to continue to practice social distancing, which may include restrictions on family and visitors while at health care facilities. While this can be difficult for everyone, these practices are required to separate those who have a contagious disease from those who are not sick.

Health care workers are at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. CSA recommends that health care facilities proactively monitor both the physical and mental well-being of their health care professionals, including but not limited to testing for COVID-19 infection. This ensures that we can maintain our highest priority – the care of the public.

The COVID-19 pandemic has engulfed the entire country and most of the world. Difficult decisions will be required. Mitigating the spread of COVID-19 infection and preserving the health of our community and our health care workforce is paramount to averting a crisis, as already seen in some parts of the world. Immediately limiting the risk of exposure to patients and health care workers to only that posed by the most necessary surgeries will help ensure ongoing access to limited resources.

Anesthesiologists and other members of the anesthesia care team care for patients in every part of the hospital – operating rooms, procedural areas, intensive care units, labor and delivery, and pain clinics. Through effective planning and implementation, the critical needs of our patients will continue to be met, while protecting the health and well-being of all health care workers.

Additional important information on anesthesia care in the COVID pandemic may be found at the following websites: