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COVID 19: Elective Case Triage Guidelines for Surgical Care

Otolaryngology

Healthcare facilities and clinicians should prioritize urgent and emergency visits and procedures now and for the coming several weeks. The following actions can preserve staff, personal protective equipment, and patient care supplies; ensure staff and patient safety; and expand available hospital capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Delay all elective ambulatory provider visits
- Reschedule elective and non-urgent admissions
- Delay inpatient and outpatient elective surgical and procedural cases
- Postpone routine dental and eyecare visits

Based on the most current compilation of information, the American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery is recommending that all otolaryngologists limit providing patient care activities to those individuals with time-sensitive, urgent, and emergent medical conditions.

It is important that members of the medical community unite and work with the general population and regulatory agencies to minimize the risk of the SARS-CoV-2 virus transmission from human to human in order to limit the development of new cases. This strategy provides the best chance to not overwhelm facilities with a limited supply of hospital beds, ICU beds, ventilators, and other critical supplies. Additionally, until disposable medical supplies and protective equipment become more available, we must conserve these for use where they are needed most.

The Academy strongly recommends that all otolaryngologists provide only time-sensitive or emergent care. This includes both office-based and surgical care. The Academy recognizes that “time sensitivity” and “urgency” is determined by individual physician judgment and must always take into account each individual patient’s medical condition, social circumstances, and needs. We must respond to the pandemic crisis and support our colleagues and communities. Please be safe!

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