

## Triage of OR Cases at BMC

Dear Colleagues,

The number of COVID patients at BMC is accelerating, and these patients require considerable care. We have decreased the volume of elective operations during the past two weeks, but circumstances may require further postponements of operations and procedures in the IPP. These actions are borne of concern for limiting population-wide exposures, protecting the health of patients and staff, and preserving resources.

Emergency, life-saving operations will proceed immediately, but many other conditions can be managed at a later date. (We have personally discussed the latter scenarios with many of you.) The challenging situations arise when, under ordinary standards, it may not be ideal to delay an elective operation. In those instances, we need to ask:

1. Is it safe to proceed with the operation?
2. Should less orthodox alternatives be applied (e.g., neo-adjuvant chemotherapy or radiation for malignancies, etc.)?
3. Will we accept less than desirable outcomes (e.g., deformity from delay of a fracture repair)?

We have developed a system to determine whether certain operations should proceed and have already implemented this program for operations on the upper aerodigestive tract (e.g., in Otolaryngology and OMFS), where the concentration of the COVID-19 virus is exceptionally high. When called upon, the primary surgeon(s) will present (via Zoom) the patient's case to a panel to discuss:

1. The merits of proceeding with the operation
2. The hazards of delay
3. Alternative measures

The three members of the panel and their alternates are:

- Chief Surgical Officer David McAneny, MD/alternate, Chair of Surgery Jennifer Tseng, MD
- Chair of Anesthesiology Rafael Ortega, MD/alternate, Vice Chair of Anesthesiology Mauricio Gonzalez, MD
- Chair or chief of the surgeon's service, with the vice chair as alternate.

There may occasionally be more than one primary surgeon (e.g., Otolaryngology and Neurosurgery for a pituitary operation); both chairs or vice chairs would then be invited to participate on the panel. Following the surgeon's presentation, the panel will immediately deliberate about whether the operation should proceed as planned.

These decisions are not being taken lightly. We appreciate your support during this exceptional moment in our profession. Best wishes to you and your families.

Thank you.

Dave McAneny  
Rafael Ortega  
Jennifer Tseng