



Patron: His Royal Highness, Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah

COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, ACADEMY OF MEDICINE OF MALAYSIA



27th March 2020

Dear Members,

Following the escalation of **COVID-19** cases in Malaysia, healthcare services, including surgery, are under increased strain. This is reflected in the morbidity and mortality affecting the healthcare workers.

It is **ESSENTIAL** for adoption of a safe or cautious approach towards surgery. The guiding principles are:

1. **PROTECTION** of health care workers and patients
2. **MAINTENANCE** of a safe healthcare environments, including operating theatres and surgical wards
3. **CONSERVATION** of resources - personnel, personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators etc.

Based on emerging evidence, the College of Surgeons, Academy of Medicine of Malaysia (CSAMM), with its integrated Chapters, **STRONGLY ADVISE** members to do the following:

1. Assume all patients are potential contacts and take adequate precautions.
2. Postpone all non-urgent clinic appointments.
3. Stop all elective operations and aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs, such as dental and oropharyngeal procedures, endoscopy).
4. Use enhanced PPE if surgery/AGP in COVID-positive patients is unavoidable, minimize involved staff.
5. Avoid laparoscopy if surgery is necessary. If laparoscopy is deemed essential, filtration devices for aerosolized particles must be used.

Other advisory measures, **WHERE FEASIBLE**, include:

1. COVID-testing for all patients undergoing emergent surgery.
2. A non-operative approach for some emergent conditions e.g. cholecystitis, appendicitis, provided the clinical status allows.
3. CT thorax prior to emergent surgery in high-risk patients
4. Cessation of positive pressure ventilation in OT during the procedure until 20 minutes after patient leaves.
5. Isolation of, and full PPE when nursing, post-operative patients until COVID status known

It is **IMPERATIVE** that the surgical community takes leadership in flattening the curve in this pandemic, for the safety of ALL. The above measures are advised until further evidence becomes available, or until such time that the Ministry of Health declares a return to normalcy of health services.

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