



The US Oncology Network, through the Surgery Advisory Council, Releases Principles to Guide Surgical Care as States Reopen

Principles will guide engagement, advocacy with stakeholders

While all providers are experiencing significant disruptions in care due to the COVID-19 pandemic, surgeons are among those hardest hit due to government-imposed shut down orders and limits on surgical procedures. Today, the surgeons of The US Oncology Network, through the Surgery Advisory Council, released the following principles to guide surgical care as states begin to reopen and surgical procedures resume:

- 1. Surgeon's Discretion:** A patient's need for surgery is at the primary discretion of the surgeon:
 - Cancer surgery or surgery for potential cancer must not be considered an elective procedure.
 - Cancer cases must remain in their own category of prioritization.
- 2. Timely Care:** Delayed treatment can lead to an increased strain on our healthcare system due to an influx of patients presenting with advanced stage cancers:
 - Insurance companies should extend prior authorizations for cancer patients' who had their previously scheduled procedures cancelled.
 - Insurance companies should pre-authorize all patients who had their surgeries delayed and do not yet have a rescheduled surgery date.
- 3. Seamless Coverage:** Rising unemployment, loss of insurance, and delays in potentially curative surgical therapy will have an immediate impact on patients currently diagnosed with cancer:
 - Policymakers should consider options to bridge coverage gaps to ensure seamless cancer care for patients dealing with job loss during this crisis.
- 4. Patient & Provider Safety:** Existing cancer patients are immunosuppressed and delaying care to reduce possible exposure to COVID-19. Others are foregoing routine health screenings and/or treatment of potential cancer symptoms. It is critical to ensure the safety of patients and surgical operations teams:
 - As healthcare providers begin to regularly schedule procedures again, patients must feel confident they can safely seek treatment. We encourage physician offices and hospitals to provide clear, concise information to patients about measures being taken to protect their health and safety during treatment.
 - In order to protect patients and surgical teams from potential exposure, hospitals must be able to provide adequate supplies of personal protective equipment and sufficient access to COVID testing with rapid results in non-emergency cases.

To download a copy of the principles, [CLICK HERE](#).

To learn more about how states are resuming surgical procedures and other policy initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit www.legislink.com/coronavirus.