



MARYLAND SOCIETY OF ANESTHESIOLOGISTS

March 23, 2020

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor of the State of Maryland
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401
VIA: <https://governor.maryland.gov/contact-us/>

RE: Elective Procedures and Preservation of Medical Supplies/Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Dear Governor Hogan,

The Maryland Society of Anesthesiologists (MSA) is a State component society of the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA). The MSA is a non-profit physician organization dedicated to promoting the safest and highest standards of the profession of anesthesiology in the State of Maryland. Our purpose is to advocate on behalf of our members for their patients through policy, education, and research.

Anesthesiologists take on diverse roles in healthcare that call for collaboration with many other physician-specialties to deliver patient care, for example, we collaborate with primary care physicians regarding medical clearance; with surgeons regarding intraoperative care; obstetricians regarding pregnancy and childbirth. Also, anesthesiology subspecialists wear other hats such as pain medicine physicians or critical care intensivists or patient safety leaders, to name a few. The expanded involvement of our profession positions anesthesiologists as crucial components of communication with and within a healthcare system. Anesthesiologists are the physicians most naturally mobilized as intensivists¹.

On behalf of MSA physicians, we applaud you for your strong leadership, forward-thinking, and early response to the COVID 19 pandemic to minimize its transmission and optimize the preparedness of the State. As the current situation continues to evolve and unfold, it has become clear that healthcare resources and supply chains are under unprecedented stresses and may collapse. It is imperative to develop a clear process to implement preventative measures, including prioritizing emergent and urgent surgeries and procedures.

We urge you to take action in halting non-emergent and non-urgent surgeries and procedures for inpatients and outpatients in all hospitals, outpatient facilities, and ambulatory surgery centers. Such a measure is not only in line with your actions to prepare for the worst and with the CDC guidance² for healthcare facilities but is necessary to preserve the limited medical supplies and to slow the spread of the virus and the inevitable and imminent surge in patients requiring ICU care.

Anesthesiologists continue to see elective (non-emergent & non-urgent) surgical and procedural cases throughout the State.

The MSA recently participated in discussions with the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC), Maryland Department of Health (MDH), ambulatory surgery centers, and other stakeholders to plan how to best utilize ambulatory surgery centers and their resources during this crisis. We will be presenting at

the next meeting led by Deputy Secretary Schrader and MHCC Executive Director Ben Steffen potential solutions such as:

1. State healthcare command center to monitor and enforce preventative measures.
2. Move non-elective surgeries from hospitals to outpatient facilities.
3. Risk stratify and cross-train staff for front-line ICU roles.
4. Repurpose facilities to increase healthcare capacity.

Thanks to your early direction, not only is our State's healthcare system moving down the right course but also had an early start. Unfortunately, it appears the disease's infectiousness precedes the start of its symptomatic phase, hence symptom-based quarantine of patients is likely less effective than social distancing measures³. Furthermore, pointing towards the need for immediate implementation of all measures put in place.

We are proud to partner with your administration in the fight against the pandemic threat to ensure Maryland "flattens the curve"⁴ and elevates the healthcare capacity threshold to lessen the degree by which the outbreak peak overwhelms the healthcare system.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Haitham Al-Grain M.D., FASA
– MSA President



Ramani Peruvemba M.D.
– MSA Vice-President

cc.

- Robert R. Neall, Secretary, Maryland Department of Health (robert.neall@maryland.gov)
- Dennis R. Schrader, Deputy Secretary, MDH-HCF & COO (Dennis.Schrader@maryland.gov)
- Ben Steffen, Executive Director, MHCC (ben.steffen@maryland.gov)

footnotes:

1. Greenland, et al. "COVID-19 Infection: Implications for Perioperative and Critical Care Physicians." *Anesthesiology* (2020). Available: <https://anesthesiology.pubs.asahq.org/article.aspx?articleid=2763458> (accessed March 21, 2020).
2. Jernigan, et al. "Update: Public Health Response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak—United States, February 24, 2020." *Weekly Report* 69 (2020). Available: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/guidance-hcf.html> (accessed March 21, 2020).
3. Anderson, Roy M., et al. "How will country-based mitigation measures influence the course of the COVID-19 epidemic?" *The Lancet* (2020).
4. Brandon Spektor "Coronavirus: What Is 'Flattening the Curve,' and Will It Work?" *LiveScience*, Purch, www.livescience.com/coronavirus-flatten-the-curve.html.