

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Tim Walz

Governor of the State of Minnesota

Commissioner Jan Malcolm

Minnesota Department of Health

Via email:

Dear Gov. Walz:

I write to you today with an urgent request. As you know, Minnesota's hospitals and health systems are in a race to prepare for an expected surge of COVID-19 patients. As we have conveyed to you over the past two weeks, the Minnesota Hospital Association continues to be concerned about the availability of supplies and inpatient capacity that need to be in place to treat a surge of acutely ill COVID-19 patients.

The state and nation face a critical shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies for acute care. Very difficult decisions are already being made by our members in order to preserve PPE and to obtain supplies.

The U.S. Surgeon General, American College of Surgeons and numerous other public health experts have recommended the cancellation of all elective surgeries and procedures that utilize PPE. The cancellation for non-essential surgeries and procedures will protect patients and our workforce; preserve critically short supplies of PPE; and preserve inpatient bed capacity and other equipment for critically ill patients.

Many Minnesota hospitals are anticipating that they need to cancel elective surgery and procedures that, if delayed, will not cause harm to the patient. Examples include: some joint replacements, some cataract surgeries, some cardiac procedures and some interventional radiology services.

In order for this to be implemented effectively, we ask that the Governor in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Health mandate the cancellation of elective surgeries in both hospital and outpatient procedural sites such as ambulatory surgery centers statewide. We cannot cancel elective procedures in one setting and allow elective surgeries to continue to occur in another setting. That will not conserve our supplies and equipment.

Hospitals will continue to provide urgent procedures as it is safe to do so, prioritizing care that if delayed could negatively affect the patient's health outcome, harm the patient or lead to disability or death.

We urge you to act immediately to mandate the cancellation and postponement of elective procedures at hospitals and all outpatient procedural sites such as ambulatory surgery centers. I am available to discuss this with you at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your continued leadership.

Warmest regards,

Rahul Koranne, M.D., MBA, FACP