

Our response to the pandemic will require constant, thoughtful adjustments and adaptations as the circumstances around us change.

Staff at each of our operating units have now acquired COVID-19 out in the community. Many of these cases have been very mild, and not obvious in the early stages. Many of the hospitals in RI, including some of our own, are now caring for COVID-19 patients.

It is now the right time to make two significant changes in the way we deliver care:

1. Starting tomorrow, we will be rescheduling all CMS (Center for Medicare/Medicaid) TIER 2 surgeries across Care New England. TIER 2 surgeries are those that, while important to do eventually, can be safely delayed for some time. TIER 2 surgeries include: surgery for diverticular disease, hernias and most non-urgent spine and orthopedic procedures. The details about which specific cases will be rescheduled (and when they will be rescheduled to) will come out in communication to the relevant teams at Kent and Women & Infants Hospital shortly. Our justification for delaying these surgeries now is that doing so will both help us preserve PPE we need to care for our COVID-19 patients and also to help prevent patients from possible exposures to COVID-19 that could happen while they are in the hospital.
2. Because it is likely that there is more COVID-19 out in the community than we know about (and many people with it may have only mild or no symptoms), we are now asking all of the staff who deal directly with patients to begin to wear masks at work so that they do not unknowingly spread COVID-19 to patients or other workers. These masks are to prevent spread (“source control”) of COVID-19 by healthcare workers. They are not for protection and they do **not** replace the PPE recommended when caring for patients with documented or possible COVID-19. The specifics of what kind of mask, how long you can use it and how you are to store it, will follow in a separate email shortly.

Thank you for your ongoing adaptability as we continually consider and implement the best approach for our patients and our staff during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,
James Fanale, MD, CEO and President, Care New England