

Approved Email for Referring Physicians and Surgeons Explaining Why a Patient's Surgery or Procedure Is Postponed

In light of recent guidance provided by NC DHHS and CMS during this National Emergency, it is imperative to evaluate each patient scheduled for surgery to determine their general medical urgency, and specifically, whether the patient meets the criteria for an elective, non-urgent procedure. This is currently defined as being able to be put off by 4 weeks without medical harm. If the planned surgery/procedure is elective and non-urgent it should be cancelled or postponed and the following should be entered into the medical record:

The medical records of this patient have been reviewed and it has been determined that, during this National Emergency and in keeping with the March 20, 2020, directive from the State of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services as well as the CMS Adult Elective Surgery and Procedures Recommendations (Version 3.15.20), this patient's scheduled surgery is an elective and non-urgent procedure as defined by these two directives. The decision to cancel/postpone this procedure was also based on the risk of concurrent COVID-19 infection during recovery, supply of available resources, and consideration of resource conservation.

If you determine that the surgery is urgent and not elective, in addition to your routine informed consent, you should also specifically discuss the additional risk posed during this National Emergency, including the increased risk of COVID-19 infection during recovery and the risks associated with such infection, including, but not limited to, the risk of death, and include the following in the patient's medical record:

During this National Emergency, I have determined that the planned procedure is not elective and is urgent. In my professional opinion if this procedure is not performed within the next four (4) weeks it would cause harm to the patient. I have also personally discussed with this patient the increased risk of COVID-19 infection during recovery and the risks associated with such infection, including, but not limited to, the risk of death.

To assist you in making decisions regarding urgent and non-urgent procedures, please find attached the NC DHHS and CMS directives.