

# Patients in a pandemic

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*For the TODAY*

In the middle of a pandemic, a discussion about “everyday health” and the medical community tends to take a backseat to the more pressing questions surrounding the spread of a new virus. However, as many of us are realizing, the impact COVID-19 has had on medical practice nationwide is far-reaching. From elective surgeries that have been postponed, to blood drives being canceled and increased concern about routine visits; the coronavirus has altered many aspects of the health care industry.

One family I spoke to, who would like to remain unnamed, experienced a long delay with an elective surgery at a hospital in California. The patient says that after suffering for years due to chronic debilitating spinal and nerve pain, it was deflating when he received the call from his surgeon that a procedure which could potentially bring much relief was being postponed. While he says his immediate family reacted with instant relief, because of their concern regarding the spread of the virus, the additional two-month set back was discouraging. His wife



ABOVE: A child wearing a face mask waits to see a doctor at a checkup. BELOW: Completion of the new Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital in Lincoln City coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

agreed. “Watching my spouse living with constant pain was disheartening,” she said, “knowing there was nothing I could do to help ease his pain”.

The patient told me that the new practices involving visitors were

difficult to wrap his head around. The day of his surgery, his wife dropped him at the entrance of the hospital and then went home to just wait for news through text and phone calls. Because she had no family nearby, the

wait alone at home seemed to go on forever; and her mind would wander to all the things that go wrong. When the patient had an adverse reaction to medication following the surgery, a very disorienting call to his wife left everyone feeling helpless as she tried to explain to the nurses what was happening. After three days in the hospital following the surgery, the patient was allowed to return home, and met his wife at the same entrance she had dropped him off at days before. Post-op recovery also looks different, as his physical therapy is put on hold for a time to reduce his risk of COVID-19 exposure so soon after surgery. This leaves much of the recovery responsibility solely on the patient and his wife.

Meanwhile, at the Oregon Coast, Lesley Ogden, MD, CEO of Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital and Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital, said the Samaritan network is aware of how crucial elective surgeries can be.

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