



New Zealand Orthopaedic Association

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To: NZOA Members

Information to NZOA Members on Elective Services

Late yesterday evening the Ministry of Health released a publication on its website entitled “Health and disability services at Alert Level 3”. The key features of this publication for elective orthopaedic surgery and consultations included both key principles and a section devoted to hospitals, amongst several other areas of health care not relevant to NZOA member’s practice.

The Key ‘Things’ are as follows:

Key things to understand about Alert Level 3:

- *Services will open and operate normally where possible, while managing public health risks.*
- *Strict hygiene measures and physical distancing measures will remain in place. Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be used when required.*
- *Testing for COVID-19 will continue at community based assessment centres (CBACs), designated practices, and some general practices.*

Under the section devoted to ‘Hospitals’ the text of the publication reads as follows:

Hospitals remain open for emergency care, whether or not that care relates to COVID-19:

- *Some planned care, including elective surgery and radiology, will be provided.*
- *Some non-urgent services or treatment may be deferred.*
- *Outpatient appointments will continue but will be mainly online or over the phone.*
- *Visitors, from extended bubble, with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be allowed one-at-a-time, once a day. Discretion may be applied on a case by case basis.*
- *Women in labour in a maternity facility will be allowed two support partners, from her extended bubble for the duration of the labour and birth.*

The Presidential Line have met this morning with a view to rapidly disseminate interpretation of these guidelines in relation to elective orthopaedic surgery in the setting of Alert Level 3 during the COVID-19 crisis. Whilst the wording of the Ministry of Health document is not necessarily specific to our practice, we see it as permissive, and this is the feedback we have received from the Ministry of Health representatives.

It is therefore the viewpoint of the Presidential Line that these guidelines allow for –

The cautious reintroduction of prioritised elective orthopaedic surgery where there is pain and disability and where patients present a low risk of complications. This applies across all elective surgical institutions.

We have used the above phrasing carefully, avoiding the attempts to introduce further scoring systems for disability or committee approvals on a case by case basis as has been discussed and attempted in other orthopaedic associations.

The approach taken by the Ministry of Health very much mirrors the submissions that the NZOA has made, along with the ACC and the Private Surgical Hospital's Association, to the Ministry of Health, for elective orthopaedic surgery at Alert Level 3. I would like to specifically acknowledge the significant contribution of our Chief Executive, Andrea Pettett, in her work with the various bodies involved in these submissions, and her communication and interaction with the Ministry of Health.

Finally, we are very confident that the approach taken by all of our members will be very much within the spirit of cautious reintroduction of services for our patients taking account of this very unusual situation that we have all lived through in the last month.

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