Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson
Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health

April 3, 2020
ADH Directive on Elective Surgeries

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109--110. Based on available scientific evidence, it is necessary and appropriate to take further action to ensure that COVID-19 remains controlled and that residents and visitors in Arkansas remain safe.

Throughout February and March of 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) recommended that healthcare facilities and clinicians prioritize urgent and emergency visits and procedures for the coming several weeks. Please see CDC Health Care Facilities Guidance and ADH Health Facilities Guidance.

On March 30, 2020, a guidance letter was sent to all health facilities, including ambulatory surgery centers and abortion facilities. Please see ADH Guidance Letter. In view of the continued uncertainty and increase in cases of COVID-19, there are increasing concerns of staff and medical supplies capabilities in hospitals statewide. The following mandatory actions can preserve staff, personal protective equipment (PPE), and patient care supplies; ensure staff and patient safety; and expand available hospital capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Procedures, testing, and office visits that can be safely postponed shall be rescheduled to an appropriate future date.
- Routine dental and eye care visits shall be postponed.
- Emergent, urgent and care designated as an exception below will continue.
- Small rural hospitals under 60 beds and critical access hospitals, though strongly advised to follow this directive to maximize resources, are excluded from this directive.

Exceptions to this directive should be made in the following circumstances:

- If there is a threat to the patient's life if the procedure is not performed.
- If there is a threat of permanent dysfunction of an extremity or organ system if the surgery is not done.
- If there is a risk of metastasis or progression of staging of a disease or condition if surgery is not performed.
- If there is a risk that the patient's condition will rapidly deteriorate if surgery is not done, and there is a threat to life or an extremity or organ system or a threat of permanent dysfunction or disability.