

# Non-covid, nonemergency spine surgery: Trying times

COVID-19 has all of a sudden thrust upon us an agonizing time. The sick and the embittered patients reeling under unendurable pain are left in the lurch. The spate of positive cases has sparked considerable anxiety in elderly patients at large who are anyways overwhelmed with their excruciating musculoskeletal agony. The fear of catching the coronavirus is compelling the non-covid patients to hold their hospital visits as it can prove to be dangerous. The harsh reality of the present times is that the hospitals, clinics, and other therapeutic centers are not safe to visit anymore. COVID-19 is known to be an “opportunistic and stealth invader.”

The sterilized operating rooms cannot guarantee against the infection. Even with stringent cleaning, protecting a patient is almost impossible. The power tools, different implements and aerosols could facilitate the transmission of the virus. Hence, the most desperate of cases can only be brought to a hospital or a clinic that too with an intensive care unit backup. The non-covid elective surgeries that are put on hold are tormenting the patients and surgeons alike. The whole world has turned into a sick room.

Orthopedics and spine surgeries have been impacted immensely. It is so unfortunate a time, that, when a skilled surgeon who has mastered the technicalities of the art and can provide relief to a patient suffering from crippling pain is unable to act for the good of the patient. Patients with spinal disorders who suffer immense pain leading to limited mobility are not getting any ray of hope. The present days are like never ending nightmares for them. The patients with unbearable pain and in agony are in deep distress. Ironically, such patients are regarded as “non-emergency and elective candidates” and sadly the only option left for them is to bear pain. Helplessness of the surgeons is creating a distinct disappointment within fraternity. The fact that availing surgical help is not an option anymore doubles the anxiety of the patient and their immediate family members. Patients with limited medical help at the hand will require more and more emotional support from the family and society. There are possibilities of them going into mental illness.

In pre-COVID days, a surgery could be the best riposte to improve the quality of life of spinal disorder patients for whom the conservative or pain management technique failed to provide any betterment. Alongside other avenues of technology, telemedicine and tele counselling are perfect virtual tools, to be used by the health-care professionals to alleviate the hopelessness in patients with distressing pain. As medical resources are stretched all over the world, so, emergencies unrelated to COVID-19 are needed to be considered with and treated according to the priority.

Mary Jodi Rell, former Republican politician, once quoted SIMPLE: At the end of the day, the goals are “SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR ALL.”

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