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MEDIA RELEASE

# COVID-19 and its impact on elective orthopaedic surgery

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Australian Orthopaedic Association

Friday, 20 March 2020

Australian patients can expect significant disruption to planned elective surgery as the impacts of COVID-19 are felt throughout an already strained health system, according to the Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA).

AOA President Dr Andrew Ellis OAM said “There are strong plans in place to sustain emergency and essential surgery. What that means is that surgery is prioritised with those experiencing severe pain and disability.”

“AOA is liaising with its members about elective surgery through its COVID-19 Working Group. Guidance is being provided to members on what elective surgery should be prioritised.

“AOA believes that significant caution needs to be exercised in the next few months with respect to elective surgery. General health, hospital admissions, and resource-consumption effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to impact significantly upon elective surgery,” Dr Ellis said.

In orthopaedics, elective surgery is typically performed in the older population group of over 70. AOA is advising caution needs to be considered about bringing these patients into hospitals and whether ICU beds are likely to be used in their treatment.

AOA aligns itself with the [Australian and New Zealand intensive Care Societies’ position](#) on the matter and with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons regarding elective surgery requiring ICU beds.

“Orthopaedic surgeons should be closely consulted regarding elective-surgery decision making in their local areas and providing expert advice around prioritisation. Low-priority surgery could be deferred until after the pandemic effects are fully known,” said Dr Ellis.

Orthopaedic surgeons are key decision makers for their patients and AOA is providing frequent and active guidance for its members.

“AOA has written to Professor Murphy offering expert advice to the Commonwealth on this matter and we have every confidence in the decisions of the authorities and jurisdictions,” added Dr Ellis.

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