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OUTSIDE **THE** LINES



THE FALL ... AND RETURN OF ELECTIVE SURGERIES

Today's Top Pick, Curated for Leaders Changing Healthcare

April 15, 2020

In mid-March, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams called on hospitals and health systems to stop elective procedures to free up beds, staffing, and PPE for the surge of COVID-19 patients. While the devastating story and impact of the virus is still unfolding, it has left many hospitals juggling varying states of uncertainty while, at the same time, dealing with a sense of urgency for some sort of “back to normal.”

Questions abound: What are the pathways forward? What will be forever different in a post-COVID world? And importantly, how to reset so that we come out of this crisis *better* than we were before?

The elective surgeries backlog is staggering. Tens of thousands of procedures

have been deferred across the country.

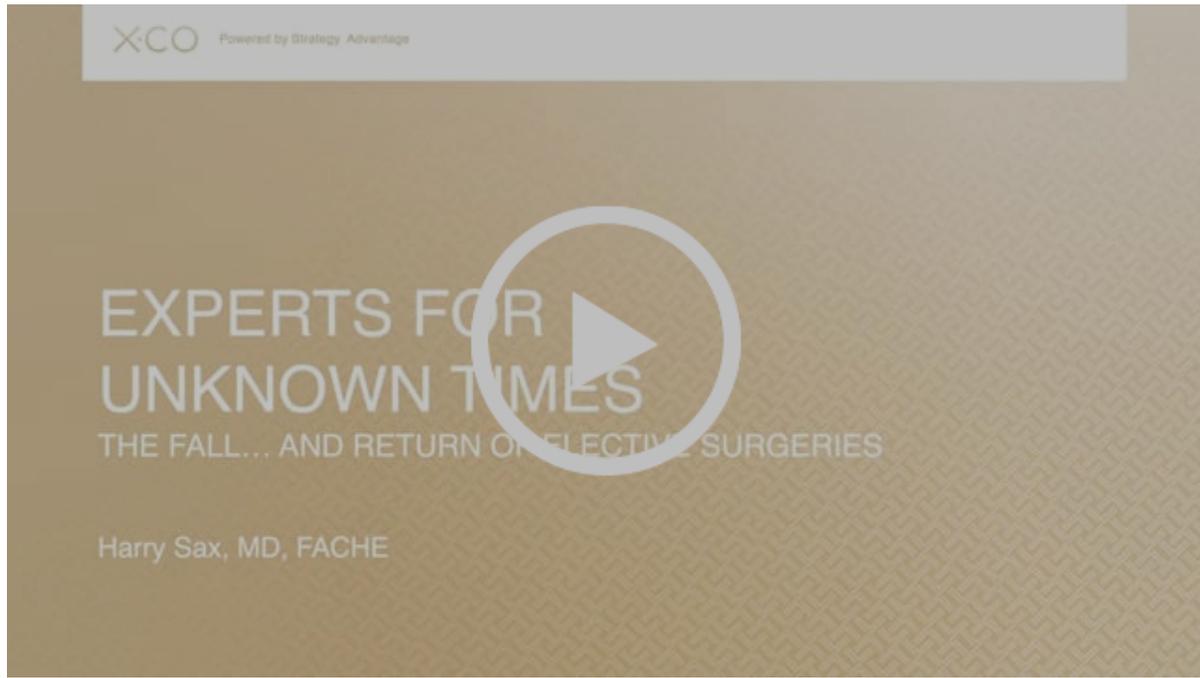
The impact has been a "double whammy" for hospitals. Between the crisis of COVID-19 patients and empty ORs, as described in a *Modern Healthcare* article, “two or three months of this ... could see many hospitals with their backs to the wall.”

The steps healthcare leaders take next - in the weeks ahead and in the years ahead - will make all the difference. Questions about what services are best done in a hospital, medical office, or ASC site of care will be re-considered. Risk stratification and Elective Surgery Acuity Scale (ESAS) tiering will be looked at anew. And workflows, requirements for infection control, and other factors will dominate the discussion, affecting permanent changes in ORs, with surgeons, and across all hospital service lines.

EXPERTS FOR UNKNOWN TIMES

As we introduce a new series, we at Strategy Advantage will offer quick interviews with our experts to provide answers and action steps to address the immediate questions on your plate. First up: addressing the return of elective surgeries. How do you steady the waters in the midst of so much change and how do you prepare to ramp back up?

Listen to this interview with Dr. Harry Sax, recorded just days ago, that will help to start you down the road again. His advice? Establish institutional priorities, including oncology, cardiac, and transplant patients who are most likely to suffer from an extended period of waiting. In addition to this point, one of his suggested 6-point plan for ramp-up, he anticipates “we will have a couple of new normals. There will be the near-term new normal of the segmentation of care including COVID patient pathways different from non-COVID patient pathways. And there will be the longer-term new normal of patient cohorts based on their illnesses and then assigned to either hospitals or ASCs for care.”



[Harry Sax](#), is a board-certified Surgeon, Executive Vice Chair of Surgery at Cedars Sinai Health System in Los Angeles, ACHE Regent for Southern California, and one of the experts in our [X:CO](#) network, powered by Strategy Advantage.

As we all move forward, we're here to help. Let us know what you need and where we can focus, relevant to you, as we continue this series. Together, healthcare leaders can – and will – find the pathways back. Even within only a month, it's amazing to see how quickly surgeons, healthcare leaders, and others have been able to get things done. As Dr. Sax put it, "It has been just an honor to be working with people who are changing healthcare on the fly ... this is one of the learnings I hope we will carry forward as we get through this crisis and then onto the other side of the COVID curve."

Always Looking Ahead,
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Click [here](#) to see the American College of Surgeons' guidance on elective surgeries, including the Elective Surgery Acuity Scale (ESAS).

Read the *Modern Healthcare* piece [here](#), indicating a 'double whammy for hospitals' as they have needed to postpone high-margin surgeries to treat coronavirus patients.

Read more [here](#) about CMS guidance for non-emergent, elective medical services, and treatment recommendations.

See more [here](#) about how hospitals have been advised to risk-stratify elective surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Click [here](#) to access other *Outside the Lines* issues produced by Strategy Advantage.

This bi-weekly e-mail is curated by the expert team from Strategy Advantage and provides a look across the horizon, and outside the lines, of the healthcare industry.

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