



P. O Box 18981-00100 Nairobi  
Menelik Medical Centre 1st Floor door 3  
Cell: (254)715260499  
[sskenya2000@gmail.com](mailto:sskenya2000@gmail.com)

**16<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Dear Members,

**COVID-19: SSK statement on recommendations for surgical procedures and outpatient clinics,**

As a society, we have all been keenly following the developments within the country and other parts of the world. The government, through the ministry of health, has introduced plans for action that will help to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This will help both the county and national units to deal better with COVID-19.

Due to the geographic spread of our members and also the scarcity of established protocols with regards to performing surgical procedures in patients inflicted with COVID-19, we would like to issue some general recommendations to our members. These are recommendations based on experiences seen globally and on recommendations by other surgical societies.

What is already known:

1. Cough, fever, fatigue, or sore throat are the most common symptoms in adults.
2. Asymptomatic spread can occur during the prodromal phase (the mean incubation period is ~5 days, with a range of 0-14 days), with viral shedding greatest when symptoms begin.
3. Leukocyte counts drop in persons with COVID-19 infection, and elevated WBC is a poor prognostic sign.
4. Older people and those listed by the CDC as vulnerable populations, including severe chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, decompensated cirrhosis, HIV with low CD4 counts, and immunosuppression, (including liver and other solid organ transplant recipients) are at higher risk of developing more serious illness. Pregnancy may be a risk.
5. The best protection against virus transmission is:
  - a. Wash hands
  - b. Don't touch your face
  - c. Cough etiquette
  - d. Social distancing
  - e. Avoid crowds

Recommendations for Operative and in-patient practice:

1. Strongly consider rescheduling elective non-urgent procedures. Some non-urgent procedures are higher priority and may need to be performed (examples include cancer evaluations, prosthetic removals, evaluation of significant symptoms)
2. Rational use of essential items needed to care for patients is encouraged. This includes but is not limited to, ICU beds, personal protective equipment, terminal cleaning supplies, and ventilators. There are reports of asymptomatic patients who are, nevertheless, shedding virus and are unwittingly exposing other inpatients, outpatients, and health care providers to the risk of contracting COVID-19.

**President:** Dr. Gome Lenga. **Vice President:** Dr. Ojuka Daniel. **Secretary** Dr. Mwachiro Michael.  
**Deputy Secretary:** Dr. Bitta Ceasar. **Treasurer** Dr. Kizito Shisanya



*P. O Box 18981-00100 Nairobi  
Menelik Medical Centre 1st Floor door 3  
Cell: (254)715260499  
[sskenya2000@gmail.com](mailto:sskenya2000@gmail.com)*

#### Recommendations at Surgery:

- When performing procedures, especially on Covid-19 positive patients, one may require N95 mask because it is the only proven mask to protect the wearer by filtering or blocking very small particles in the air.
- Standard surgical masks may be used, but the wearer has to be aware that they block and filter large particles and may expose the wearer due to the gaps on the side and do not offer the same level of protection as the N95 mask.

#### Recommendations for clinic/outpatient scenarios:

- Check body temperature of the patient upon arrival
- Keep all patients at an appropriate distance from each other (6 feet is recommended) throughout the entire time in the unit.
- It is important to conserve PPE. Only essential personnel should be present in cases. Consider extended use or reuse of surgical masks and eye protection in accordance with hospital policies.
- It is important for each site to address collective staff needs and institute policies that protect their workforce.
- Patients on ongoing medication and immunosuppressive drugs for IBD and autoimmune hepatitis should continue taking their medications. The risk of disease flare outweighs the chance of contracting coronavirus. These patients should also follow CDC guidelines for at-risk groups by avoiding crowds and limiting travel.

#### Recommendations regarding residents:

To avoid crowding, we advise that each site look at their site and personnel. In addition, we advise that residents and attendees can adopt “on call” strategies to minimize exposure and maximize efficiency while also ensuring that staff are rested. Team morale is key at this time whilst maintaining safety. All team members should also be properly trained with use of PPE- donning and doffing with inventories kept securely.

We urge that all our members work with the respective units at county or at national levels, as is appropriate, with the current MOH guidelines so to aid rapid identification and also limit the spread of COVID-19. These are available at the MOH website.

Lastly, we are all part of the health care response team in this country and as such, we should all take care of ourselves, our colleagues, our patients and our families. We acknowledge and appreciate the tireless role you play in the provision of quality surgical care in this country.

SSK council

**President:** Dr. Gome Lenga. **Vice President:** Dr. Ojuka Daniel. **Secretary** Dr. Mwachiro Michael.  
**Deputy Secretary:** Dr. Bitta Ceasar. **Treasurer** Dr. Kizito Shisanya



P. O Box 18981-00100 Nairobi  
Menelik Medical Centre 1st Floor door 3  
Cell: (254)715260499  
[sskenya2000@gmail.com](mailto:sskenya2000@gmail.com)

#### References:

1. Ministry of Health: General Information on Coronavirus Disease 2019 <http://www.health.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/General-information-about-COVID-19.pdf>
2. American College of Surgeons COVID-19: Recommendations for Management of Elective Surgical Procedures
3. Ministry of Health: <http://www.health.go.ke/covid-19/>
4. JOINT GI SOCIETY MESSAGE: COVID-19 Clinical Insights for Our Community of Gastroenterologists and Gastroenterology Care Providers
5. Interim Guidance for Healthcare Facilities: Preparing for Community Transmission of COVID-19 in the United States. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/guidance-hcf.html>
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
7. Anesthesia considerations: Recommendations for Airway Management in a Patient with Suspected Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) infection <https://www.apsf.org/wp-content/uploads/news-updates/2020/apsf-coronavirus-airway-management-infographic.pdf>

**President:** Dr. Gome Lenga. **Vice President:** Dr. Ojuka Daniel. **Secretary** Dr. Mwachiro Michael.  
**Deputy Secretary:** Dr. Bitta Ceasar. **Treasurer** Dr. Kizito Shisanya