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Texas Back Institute postpones elective surgery, turns to telemedicine amid coronavirus outbreak

Written by *Laura Dyrda* | March 17, 2020 | [Print](#) | [Email](#)

Texas Back Institute in Plano is postponing all elective cases for two weeks and will rely on virtual visits and telemedicine to conduct follow-up with existing patients or initial visits with new patients during that time.

The practice is making this change due to the coronavirus outbreak. Hospitals across the nation are canceling or postponing elective surgeries amid the pandemic, focusing resources and attention on treating patients with suspected or confirmed cases of the coronavirus. Limiting face-to-face interactions will also help prevent the spread of the virus; the CDC has recommended limiting gatherings to 50 or fewer people and President Donald Trump advised not attending gatherings of more than 10 people at a time.

"These are unprecedented times," said Texas Back Institute President Isador Lieberman, MD. "In the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are all faced with many difficult decisions. Guiding these decisions and the top priority for TBI is the health and safety of our patients, our families and ourselves. We considered and reviewed all the news reports and official announcements from around the country and around the world. We considered the current situation locally and the fact that we do not know where we are on the growth curve. What we did know is that the growth curve is exponential and the sooner we initiate social distancing practices the better our chance of flattening the curve and saving lives."

The TBI executive committee and management team reviewed all information available as well as current operations and patient flow before deciding to postpone elective cases and initiate screening protocols. The practice is also providing the appropriate protective gear for patients and providers and adopting telemedicine and virtual visits where possible to limit travel and the potential for exposure.

"We are scaling back to provide face-to-face services to only patients with 'critical spine care issues,'" said Dr. Lieberman. "This will necessitate the redeployment of our human resources in different ways to comply with screening and risk mitigation processes. We are also redeploying our human resources to tackle the changes in delivery of care associated with expanding our virtual and telemedicine appointments. We suspect that most of our employees will remain busy during this situation."

TBI's executive committee and management will continue to monitor the situation, which is constantly

evolving. "This situation will absolutely inconvenience everyone, however that inconvenience is minimal compared to the virulence and risks of coronavirus," said Dr. Lieberman. "This pandemic will change the way we practice medicine for many generations to come. The COVID -19 outbreak will redefine the importance of surveillance, communication and vigilance when dealing with infectious diseases."

More articles on spine surgery:

[HSS suspends non-essential care due to coronavirus outbreak: 5 things to know](#)

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