

7/9/2009

Temporary reduction of elective surgery and conversion of surgical beds to medical beds in Fraser Health – February/March 2010

For four weeks in February/March 2010, Fraser Health is planning to temporarily reduce elective surgeries and convert surgical beds to medical beds to manage rising patient volumes due to winter surge. This will also coincide with the need for flexibility during the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games. Additionally, it will provide some cost savings in these difficult economic times.

- The total period of elective surgery reductions is **February 12 - March 19, 2010**. (Four weeks plus one week traditional spring break reduction.)
- Elective surgeries will be temporarily reduced by 35 per cent across the region at all sites that have a surgical program.
- 65 per cent of elective surgeries will continue as usual, including urgent cases, and in addition to emergency surgeries.
- This affects an estimated 2000 surgeries, representing slightly more than 3 per cent of the total surgeries performed each year across Fraser Health (based on 08/09). The impact on overall patient care will be kept to a minimum.
- This reduction period is in addition to the normal eight-week summer reductions and the normal two-week Christmas reduction. Fraser Health has implemented a regional standard for all seasonal reductions.
- The temporary reduction will provide Fraser Health hospitals with additional inpatient capacity to manage winter surge, which may be exacerbated this year if H1N1 reappears during flu season.
- Both Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health will reduce elective surgeries coinciding with the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games, which is predicted to increase traffic gridlock, affecting patients and care providers. The reductions provide additional flexibility in our region to respond to a major emergency during the Winter Olympics.
- The results of these reductions will be evaluated to determine their benefits and impact.
- As Fraser Health continues to examine how to make the most effective and efficient use of our surgical resources, there may be other changes. These will be shared with physicians and staff as they develop.

Surgeons and Anaesthesiologists

- We fully appreciate that this reduction in surgeries will impact Surgeons and Anaesthesiologists.
- Information about this initiative was inadvertently released prematurely while planning was underway. Regretfully, it occurred before we had opportunity to share with physicians and staff. However, impacted groups will be consulted about how to implement the changes, and to standardize the reductions across the region in a fair and logical manner.
- Operating Room time will be concentrated on the most urgent cases, regardless of type. Surgeons will make the decisions about which patients must receive immediate care and which are able to wait without impacting their health.
- Although elective surgeries are being reduced by 35 per cent, 65 per cent of cases will proceed, in addition to emergency surgeries.

Hospital Departments and Staff

- Staff and other departments servicing the ORs may be impacted by the reductions in elective surgeries. These include (but are not limited to) Nursing staff, Lab, Medical Imaging, Sterile Processing, Linen and Laundry, and support services.
- Impacts to staff have not yet been identified. However, directors and managers will soon be planning for this period, including determining which staff want to take vacation or leave during these weeks, and exploring options such as redeployment. Staff will be consulted and informed as this planning develops.

Comments and concerns may be discussed with Medical Directors and Executive Directors, and Department Managers.

For those interested, a reduction in services during this time will allow physicians, nurses and other health professionals to volunteer their services for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games to meet the medical needs of athletes, team support staff, volunteer medical staff and spectators. VANOC requires the volunteer services of 1,750 medical personnel for the Games.