



## THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1200 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

MAR 24 2020

### HEALTH AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (MANPOWER AND  
RESERVE AFFAIRS)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (MANPOWER AND  
RESERVE AFFAIRS)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE (MANPOWER  
AND RESERVE AFFAIRS)  
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY

SUBJECT: Elective Surgical, Invasive, and Dental Procedures in Military Treatment Facilities

This memorandum directs all Military Treatment Facility (MTF) and Dental Treatment Facility (DTF) Commanders and Directors to immediately postpone all elective surgeries, invasive procedures, and dental procedures performed on beneficiaries of the MTFs and DTFs with the exceptions outlined below. This includes aerosol-producing procedures, such as endoscopies, bronchoscopies, pulmonary function tests, and sleep continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) titrations.

This policy is effective March 31, 2020, and will remain in place for 60 days. This action aligns with actions being taken across the nation to conserve vital healthcare resources during this public health emergency, to include bed space, personal protective equipment, supplies, and medical personnel. This policy also protects patients, medical personnel, and the community from further exposure and transmission of COVID-19.

MTF and DTF Commanders and Directors may authorize surgeries or procedures that can be safely performed at their facility if required to maintain deployability and readiness of Active Duty Service Members including any Reserve component or National Guard member activated or issued a delayed-effective-date active duty order, as provided in 10 U.S.C. 1074(d). MTF and DTF Commanders' and Directors' may authorize an elective surgery or procedure if, after consulting with the relevant medical or dental specialist, he or she determines the risk to the patient of delaying the surgery or procedure outweighs safety concerns and logistics considerations (e.g. availability of beds, supplies, equipment, and medical providers). Any patient whose procedure is cancelled will be contacted through a means that confirms receipt and, to the greatest extent possible, by personal phone call.

As the Military Health System prepares for a surge in demand for health care services related to COVID-19, it is essential that we take prompt action, informed by local conditions and your risk-benefit analysis. I deeply appreciate your leadership role in our comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The needs of the mission, the needs of the patient, and local environmental conditions are all important considerations.

As you take action, I ask that you be mindful of the impact that cancelling or postponing surgery has on our patients, their families and our professional staff. While their surgeries may be elective, this is nonetheless a meaningful change to their life plans.

My point of contact for this policy is Richard Mooney, MD, MPH Acting Deputy  
Assistant Secretary of Defense Health Services Policy and Oversight at  
[richard.l.mooney.civ@mail.mil](mailto:richard.l.mooney.civ@mail.mil) or (703) 681-8367

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom McCaffery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Tom McCaffery