

November 19, 2020**Immediate Release****Contact:** JoAnn Cavanaugh, Director Public Relations
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Catholic Health Proactively Suspends Inpatient Elective Surgery Based on Growing COVID-19 Numbers and Need for Hospital Beds

As the COVID-19 virus continues to increase at a dramatic pace in Western New York, surpassing peak volumes Catholic Health saw last spring, system officials are temporarily suspending all inpatient elective surgery procedures only from Saturday, November 21 through Saturday, December 5. Outpatient elective surgery procedures will continue as planned, as well as those considered urgent or emergent, based on the discretion of the surgeon.

Inpatient elective surgery procedures are scheduled in advance, requiring at least an overnight hospital stay, but not considered a medical emergency. Emergent procedures generally involve a medical emergency, while urgent procedures are those that if not performed, will likely lead to more serious complications. Decisions on urgent procedures will be made in consultation with the surgeon based on the patient's defined medical status.

"We must proactively ensure we have flexibility in our bed capacity to care for the growing number of COVID patients we are seeing in our hospitals," said Mark A. Sullivan, President & CEO of Catholic Health. "Making these necessary adjustments is the best way to manage what's here now and prepare for what's projected to come."

Catholic Health is using published and internal predictive analytics to forecast the virus surge. The suspension of inpatient elective surgery will allow the system to flex up hospital beds to care for the influx of COVID patients that are forecasted over the next two weeks.

"There is a high probability Western New York will be faced with bed shortages in the coming weeks," Sullivan continued. "After careful consultation with our medical staff and hospital presidents, we determined the best and safest approach to keep pace with the current and anticipated demand for inpatient COVID care at this time, is to reduce inpatient elective surgery admissions."

Catholic Health leaders will continue to assess COVID transmission and hospitalization rates over the next two weeks to make a decision on inpatient elective surgery after December 5. "The health and safety of our patients, medical staff, and associates is our top priority," said Sullivan. "We firmly believe the proactive approach we are taking will protect everyone's safety while putting our caregivers in the best position to respond to the second wave of this pandemic."

Patients who have an inpatient surgical procedure scheduled between November 21 and December 5 are asked to contact their surgeon's office for more information.

"The week leading up to Thanksgiving and the following week will be critical as we monitor COVID admissions in our hospitals and trends across the region," Sullivan added. "Our greatest hope is that with everyone wearing masks, washing their hands, social distancing, and limiting large gatherings, we can reverse this alarming trend."