

Dear Colleague,

In order to prepare for the evolving COVID-19 pandemic within our community and at the direction of the Province of Ontario, hospitals are curtailing ambulatory activity to only urgent and emergent cases. This decision will help limit exposure of COVID 19 to our patients, families, staff and doctors.

Where appropriate, clinics or specialist offices will be contacting patients to offer telephone or video visits. Given the situation, we are strongly encouraging patients to take advantage of this option as wait times when our situation stabilizes will likely be very long.

In many cases, patients will be informed that their appointment is deferred. If this is the case, **we are informing patients that we will not be able to offer an alternate appointment prior to July 2nd**. This date may be further extended as we continue to understand the ongoing impact of the pandemic within our community.

Certainly, if a patient's condition should evolve to require urgent assessment, we will respond to this with a further virtual visit or if needed, an onsite assessment.

You can expect to receive notes from any virtual visits in the usual manner.

Decisions are being made collaboratively, based on sound ethical standards. We sincerely appreciate your understanding and collaboration during this challenging time.

We are committed to maintaining effective communication between our referring colleagues and our clinics. If you or your patients are not successful in reaching us in a reasonable time frame, please consider the following:

1. Have your office attempt a call or fax the clinic or MD through your usual processes
2. Call McMaster paging and ask for the specialist on call for that service
3. If a patient cannot wait for a possible specialist visit due to emergent or urgent needs, please advise them to go to the Emergency Department

Thank you for your continued collaboration. Sincerely,

Barry J. Lumb, MD, FRCPC
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