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Ensuring the Safety of Elective Surgeries During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Spine Nevada understands safety concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. We've moved aggressively in both inpatient and outpatient settings to provide social distancing guidelines and mitigation techniques to help avoid the spread of infection.

RENO, NV (May 11, 2020)-- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and concern for the possible drain on hospital resources including both low acuity and high acuity (or ICU) bed availability for COVID-19 infections, the local healthcare system enacted policies to postpone all elective surgeries except semi-urgent and emergency conditions such as progressive neurologic deficit and life-threatening situations. Spine Nevada Minimally Invasive Spine Institute (SNMISI) has been very aggressive in supporting and implementing these inpatient policies at all the major hospitals, including Renown, St. Mary's, Northern Nevada Medical Center, Carson Tahoe, and the outpatient Surgery Center of Reno. The tactics began on 03/16/2020 and continued until Monday, 05/04/2020. Thankfully, we have seen a lower than expected infection and mortality rate in Nevada and, more specifically, in Washoe County. As a result, with the advice of local healthcare officials and specific guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the National Institute of Health as well as the American College of Surgeons, the Washoe County medical facilities have opened up and returned to performing elective surgeries.

The decision to resume elective surgeries prompted a slew of questions both from hospitals providing the care and the patients' concerns about returning to the hospital inpatient or outpatient environment. Spine Nevada understands these concerns and has moved aggressively in both inpatient and outpatient settings to provide social distancing guidelines and mitigation techniques that have kept the spread of infections in our offices to zero. The prevention methods at SNMISI include the use of personal protective equipment and social distancing guidelines as well as aggressive cleaning of the clinical space before and after patient visits.

Regarding the return to elective surgeries, local hospitals and the Surgery Center of Reno have instituted aggressive policies to ensure patient safety. "The most important of these is COVID-19 testing for all patients undergoing elective surgery," explains Dr. Edward Perry, a board-certified neurological surgeon at Spine Nevada Minimally Invasive Spine Institute and Chief of Neurosurgery at Renown Regional Medical Center. "The testing typically takes place a week before surgery, allowing for ample time for clearance before surgery. Also, there are additional precautions in place during multiple preop telephone questionnaires to help ensure the patients haven't developed any occult symptoms or encountered recent exposure to patients who are COVID-19 positive. Furthermore, Spine Nevada has instituted a policy during this transition period to select cases that are of lower acuity or less complexity to avoid prolonged hospitalization or need for rehabilitation services after surgery."

Minimally invasive spine surgery is perfectly tailored for this need as the inpatient stays are usually much shorter, and patients rarely need postoperative rehabilitation. The fellowship-trained neurological surgeons at Spine Nevada are all trained and experienced in the use of minimally invasive spine techniques and technologies. "We understand that these challenging times require added diligence to patient safety and added attention to address patient concerns. Northern Nevada data is showing that people are delaying medical care, which in turn can lead to more intense and sometimes irreversible symptoms. Please be assured; medical providers are taking precautions, and consumers should seek healthcare when they need it," explains Dr. Perry. "The Spine Nevada team is available for in-office and virtual telemedicine appointments for back, neck, and joint conditions. We have been proactive throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure we can provide the services in a safe environment. We encourage patients to be confident about seeking healthcare when they need it."

About Spine Nevada Minimally Invasive Spine Institute

With office locations in Reno, Sparks, and Carson City, Spine Nevada is a regional center of excellence offering a comprehensive approach to spine and musculoskeletal care. The center includes fellowship-trained neurological surgeons, spine specialists board-certified in physical medicine, and radiology; and specialty-trained physical therapists, physical therapy clinics, and InMotion Diagnostics. These spine experts take a conservative first approach and combine their expertise to develop the most appropriate treatment for each patient.

Founded by Dr. James Lynch in 2004, SpineNevada's goal is to be recognized as a regional center of excellence that demonstrates innovation in non-surgical and surgical spine care, and then documents its superior care with clinical outcomes. The center's mission is to help its patients return to active lives through compassionate, evidence-based spine and MSK care, including non-surgical treatment options and the most technologically advanced minimally invasive surgical techniques.

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