

COVID Awareness Issue

COVID Impact on Patients and Practice

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2020 has finally come to an end but the misery of the pandemic is nowhere close to resolution.

- Practice analysis showed a total of 80 workdays lost due to COVID-related business closure or slowing for a total of 12 weeks. PPP helped us in avoiding staff layoffs for 8 weeks. I have elected to not cut hours or staffing, taking on the loss on myself until we run out of savings. This is a terrible way to be in business. Not sure how long this can work.
- Two weeks of the 12 lost weeks were due to my COVID and the need to take off because of return-to-work restrictions.
- We saw a 45 % drop in income in 2020. we saw a 60% decline in the volume of office-based procedures due to erratic patient cancellations, due to staff COVID infections, and mandated closures. Widespread cancellation and postponement of visits of patients and procedures have had a horrible impact on patients.
- One young patient had advanced stage colon cancer and required to undergo pre-operative chemo-irradiation therapy while he could have been helped with resection in one step had he not chosen to repeatedly postpone the scheduled colonoscopy for 9 months for fear of COVID. Quite a few patients experienced a dramatic escalation of severity of illness due to fear that prevented them from getting the needed care
- 30% of patients have put off doing elective procedures due to fear of COVID and those scheduled and

cancelled in the hospital have been reluctant to reschedule. This cohort represents the highest risk group for missing cancers if they put off needed tests.

- Hospital is unable to staff units and all elective endoscopic procedures are being cancelled or postponed. These patients are very unlikely to reschedule procedures
- We have scores of inflammatory bowel disease patients on clinical trials. Their care was affected as clinical trials went into lockdown mode for long period and some patients could not continue on trials due to “breach of protocols” beyond my control.
- Unless the society and hospitals remain open, I anticipate phasing out my practice over the next year. If the immunization of the population is completed by June, it may make operations profitable enough to continue to work.

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