



ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE NI REGIONAL CANCER SURGICAL GROUP

Covid-19: Public statement from the NI Regional Cancer Surgical Group

18/11/2020

The Northern Ireland Regional Cancer Surgical group support Minister Swann in acknowledging that the care of people waiting for treatment with other serious conditions, such as cancer, is being delayed as a direct result of the continued impact of COVID 19 on hospitals.

As cancer clinicians we will always do our best to ensure that we can provide patients with the best possible care at this extremely difficult time in their lives. However, at present, large numbers of specialist theatre and intensive care staff are caring for patients with COVID, and as a result we have had to cut back on diagnostic surgical procedures and surgical cancer treatments.

We very much recognise the anxiety and the very real impact this has on patients and their families, and it is also a matter of great regret and distress to everyone working in the health service. We would assure patients that their cases will be prioritised for re-scheduling as soon as possible.

All of this starkly reinforces the urgent and continued need to drive down the infection rate in the community in order to decrease the number of people in hospital with Covid-19. This will allow specialist staff to resume their essential cancer work.

The Northern Ireland Regional Cancer Surgical Group fully appreciates the incredibly difficult dilemmas facing NI political leaders. We would urge them to do everything they can to drive down Covid infection rates and keep them low.

Northern Ireland must not prolong the period where so many of our specialist staff are unavailable for cancer surgery.

The impact of this will be continued delays in cancer diagnosis, delays in surgical treatment, more suffering for cancer patients, and may risk more untimely deaths from cancer.

The Regional Cancer Surgical group also appeal to the public to help stop the spread of the Coronavirus by following the public health advice to reduce our contacts with others, keep our distance, wear a face covering, wash our hands and keep to the COVID regulations.