



**TIMOTHY C. PRINGLE, M.D.**

**VASCULAR SURGEON & VEIN SPECIALIST**

Adapting Vascular Surgery Practice During the COVID Crisis

Carrollton, Texas

August 1, 2020

# Background

- Case Western Reserve Medical School 1991-1995
- Preliminary Surgery University Hospitals of Cleveland 1995-6
- Categorical Surgery Medical College of Ohio (currently The university of Toledo) 1996-2002
- Vascular Fellowship Good Samaritan Hospital Cincinnati, Ohio 2002-2004
- Grant Medical Center Level 1 Trauma Center 2004-2007

# Background

- Vascular Director Lewisville Medical Center 2008-2010
- Community Based Vascular Surgery Solo Practice
- Practice green light 2008 ( started solo practice from scratch)
- CEO Core Vascular Services 2011-present Carrollton, Texas
- **Restructured practice** ( eliminated billers, eliminated transcriptionist, skeletonized staff)
- Established EMR with its own clearing house, superbill, templated notes,
- **Focused on developing office base practice (vascular testing , laser ablation, Sclerotherapy, vein wave) and nutritional counseling**

Continue

- 90% of my practice is currently Office based
- 10% Open procedures and endovascular procedures performed at Baylor Carrollton Medical Center  
Currently bought by SANA health Care
  - Endovascular ( arteriograms with interventions, fistulogram, shuntograms)
  - Open surgery ( carotids, EVAR, AVG/AVF creation, open bypass)
- March 1, 2020 renamed Carrollton Regional Medical Center
- Transitioned in the middle of the pandemic

# Covid Timeline

- **March 25-31, 2020 Denton County Order for all businesses to close, shelter in place**
- **Collin County stated all businesses were essential**
- **Due to lack of clarity and safety for our patients we closed our office from March 26-April 1**
- **Staff was given this time off with pay**
- **March 27,2020 President signed into Law the CARES ACT**

## Timeline Cont.

- **During this time :**
- We confirmed the guidelines for essential business in Denton county
- We received **SBA Debt relief** ( 6 months rent payments)
- We had to apply to a smaller community bank for the **Paycheck Protection Program** since our bank accommodated larger corporations first
- We received a **Medicare stimulus check** as a direct deposit determine by a percentage of the number of Medicare patients seen annually over previous years
- We did not apply for the EIDL or the SBA bridge loan

## Re-opening Office

- We had the office sanitized prior to return
- **April 2,2020** we saw our first patient as a telehealth visit
- Our staff was educated pertaining to how to protect themselves from the Coronavirus, Symptoms to observe and how to boost their immune system which is their best defense after social distancing.
- Personally I practiced social distancing, Spacial exercise ( biking and tennis) and boost my immune system with natural herbs.

# COVID Screening Protocol

- Telephone screen by front office specialist prior to visit
  - Are you sick or have you been sick in the last two weeks?
  - Have you experienced body aches, fever, sore throat, dry cough, loss of taste or SOB?
  - Have you been around anyone sick in the last two weeks?
  - Have you traveled out of the country or to New York recently?
  - Have you been on a boat or a plane recently?
- Check temperature in waiting room prior to visit
- Patients only; no family in waiting room
- Must wear mask, if no mask we provided a mask



# High Risk

- **Telemedicine visits established for high risk patients**
  - Nursing home patients
  - Patients over the age of 80
  - Or anyone who was uncomfortable coming to the office

# Healthy Patients

- Healthy patients who answered no to our screening protocol were seen
- Sanitizer with 70% alcohol was provided in the waiting room along with mask before entering back office
- Rooms were sanitized between each patient ( door handles, counters, equipment , faucets, light switches and hands)

## Action Steps To Protect Our Most Vulnerable Patients

- Educated patients pertaining to the importance of social distancing and wearing a mask. How one person not practicing social distance can infect many
- Provided nutritional counseling and tried to identify nutritional deficits ( Vit. D deficiency, Zinc deficiency) which would make our patients more vulnerable to coronavirus
- Healthy diet of Fruits and vegetables and herbal supplements to boost immune system
- Emphasized the importance of medical compliance and control of comorbid conditions which would make them more susceptible to Coronavirus ( ex. DM)
- Social distance exercise ( biking, running, tennis ect)

# Hospital Guidelines

- **Governor Abbott Banned elective procedures March 26, 2020**
- **Emergency procedures only ( ruptured aneurysms, ischemic limbs, symptomatic carotid artery, vascular trauma ect.)**
- **Elective procedures were not re-established until April 27, 2020**
- **Hospital screening protocol:**
  - **All staff and visitors were required to have temperature taken upon entering hospital and mask was required**
  - **Family of patients are required to wait outside hospital during procedures**
  - **All patients requiring general anesthetic were required to have a negative COVID test two days prior to surgery**

## Hospital Guidelines Cont.

- Endovascular procedures or patients who were treated with local anesthesia only, initially were not required to have a negative COVID test and a screening history was performed only along with wearing a mask but this has changed.
- Initially everyone was required to have a test and now testing is being left up to the patient to obtain prior to procedure
- Most recent statement by our hospital was that they are no longer providing COVID testing
- **Insurance companies are not covering “precautionary testing”**

# Families First Coronavirus Response Act

- Congress requires health plans to fully pay for testing deemed “medically necessary”
- Gray area- insurance companies are not considering precautionary testing “ medically necessary”

The background features several sets of concentric, curved lines in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a sense of motion and depth. A prominent red speech bubble shape is positioned on the left side of the slide.

## Corona Pandemic Lessons

- **Ownership**
- **Relationships**
- **Diversity**
- **Balance**

# Summary

- Office based vascular surgery practice has been minimally impacted by the pandemic
- Our practice has grown during the pandemic and expanded in areas of nutrition
- CARES ACT provided a positive stimulus to my practice through the SBA debt relief
- Importance of a relationship with a small community bank which provided our Paycheck Protection Program