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MEDIA CONTACT:

Suzanne Montanaro
Marketing Consultant
(507) 526-6168
smontanaro@uhd.org

United Hospital District Resumes Operations and Prepares for Discussions with Patients about Safely Returning for Surgery

New tools from the American College of Surgeons are assisting facility and patients alike

Blue Earth, MN – June 11, 2019: As health care facilities resume operations paused due to COVID-19 – including United Hospital District (UHD), a new survey shows a significant number of patients are fearful of undergoing procedures and may not reschedule necessary care while COVID-19 continues to circulate in communities. UHD wants patients to feel comfortable returning for needed care, and as part of that effort, it is using a new resource from the American College of Surgeons (ACS), “Preparing to have surgery during the time of COVID-19.”

The resource includes a patient-surgeon discussion guide with suggested questions patients can ask their surgeon to feel more prepared for returning to the health care facility. The guide also covers common concerns such as how the check-in process has changed, what to expect during appointments, safeguards to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and how the ongoing pandemic may change after-operation care.

UHD surgeon Alex Wong, MD, FACS stated, “Standard and routine care needs to go on, as life still goes on. COVID-19 is another disease that we will have to deal with, and UHD stands ready. In line with our institutional motto, UHD is Committed care, and STILL committed to YOU.”

New research found more than a third of patients would not feel comfortable returning to care until at least three months have passed after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted in their area, and one in five would not feel comfortable until over six months have passed.* Having frank and open discussions with their surgeons may help ease concerns about returning for care. Patients fearful of risks may wait too long to seek the necessary, and sometimes lifesaving, care they need.

At UHD, CEO Rick Ash outlined some of their reopening precautions. “We are carefully monitoring the COVID-19 data in our community, which we consider along with other important factors, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) availability and adequate workforce. We continue to implement the everchanging protocols and best practice recommendations, which currently include universal face masking throughout all patient care areas, using additional PPE when necessary and screening all patients and staff upon entrance, which allows us to isolate symptomatic patients from non-symptomatic patients immediately. Additionally, we’ve taken the opportunity to roll out new technology-enabled patient care solutions and implement heightened infection

prevention strategies and policies.” He added that, “UHD is proud of our employees and medical staff as they continue to rise above the challenges to assure our community members have safe access to their healthcare.”

The new tools complement the [hospital guidance document](#) ACS released on April 17.

Preparing to have surgery during the time of COVID-19 is available here [[facs.org/be-prepared](#)].

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*Revive Health. "Consumer Survey Update COVID-19." Accessed May 26, 2020. Available at: <https://go.thinkrevivehealth.com/covid-findings-report-3>.

About United Hospital District

UHD, located in Blue Earth, MN, is a system of care comprised of a 25-bed acute care hospital, comprehensive outpatient services, ambulance service and home health/hospice care all supported by a 20-plus multi-specialty provider group with four clinic locations across two counties. For more information, visit www.uhd.org.

About the American College of Surgeons

The American College of Surgeons is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and improve the quality of care for surgical patients. The College is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery. Its achievements have significantly influenced the course of scientific surgery in America and have established it as an important advocate for all surgical patients. The College has more than 82,000 members and is the largest organization of surgeons in the world. For more information, visit www.facs.org.