

Editorial: The Economic Downturn and Ambulatory Surgery

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The present financial crisis is affecting all countries to a greater or lesser extent. Governments are having to provide funds to shore up financial institutions, to provide liquidity to the markets and to try and stimulate economic activity. As a consequence, funding for other government activities is being reduced or, at best, contained with no allowance for inflation. Healthcare is no exception. In the area of elective surgery, ambulatory surgery is a proven high quality approach which has significantly lower costs than inpatient care. As few, if any, countries have maximised ambulatory surgery rates across all specialities and procedures, an increased transfer of patients from inpatient to ambulatory surgery could be used to maintain or increase elective surgery levels in the face of frozen or reduced funding. Perhaps the present fiscal crisis will open the eyes of governments and other healthcare providers to the benefit of stimulating the growth of ambulatory surgery.

There is no better time for those interested in ambulatory surgery to draw once again this approach to treatment to the attention of healthcare policy makers and providers in order that, by its increased use, patients can continue to have access to affordable and appropriate levels of quality elective surgical care despite the economic downturn.

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