Hello. My name is Tim Sielaff. I have the honor of being the Chief Medical Officer for Allina Health. What I’d like to do today is update you on what we’re doing to prepare for the surge of COVID patients and to provide safe and accessible care to patients today so that they can have their health care needs met.

A few weeks ago, the governor rightly put forth a request to delay surgery that wasn’t an emergency in nature. In doing so, we were able to delay the surge. We were able to prepare better for the surge. And there have been improvements in testing and improvements in personal protective equipment.

Now is the time, with the surge delayed, that we can take on the care of those individuals with time-sensitive surgical needs, such as cancer operations, cardiovascular interventions, and orthopedic procedures that repair traumatic injuries. It’s important to understand that patients are worried about coming into our facilities. Preventative care is health care.

And so we have worked, again, to redouble our efforts to make sure that our already very safe facilities are made even more so, that we’re screening staff and patients before they come into the facility, that we’re impeccably cleaning and re-cleaning our facilities and our surfaces once patients have left. And we are working to make sure that we maintain social distancing, wearing masks, and have an environment that is both inviting and safe for all of the folks who come into our clinics.

We’ve already had exceptional environmental services. In fact, the Minnesota Hospital Association has used Allina Health’s approach to cleaning as a statewide standard. It’s important for all patients who need care to know that it’s available and know that it’s safe. Patients that are experiencing symptoms of heart attacks, or strokes, or who have diabetes care that needs to be managed really should not avoid getting the necessary care that they need.

So what we have done is created, again, those safe environments for patients to come to clinics if they need to be seen in person, but we’ve also created significant access through virtual visits and telephone contacts for patients who don’t need to necessarily be seen specifically. The ability to reach out to patients proactively and allow them to stay in their homes through video visits has increased 8,000%. One week, weeks ago, we did more video visits in that week than we had done in the entire previous year. That’s created new forms of access that are safe and that are allowing us to manage patients before they get ill and manage their current chronic illnesses in a different way.

So it is the case that if you need care, you should reach out for care, whether it’s through video visits, whether it’s through telephones, or whether it’s through clinics or coming to our emergency departments for necessary care. Like other health systems in the state, Allina is significantly increasing its ability to test patients for COVID. That’s allowing us to take care of more patients with time-sensitive surgical needs. It’s allowing us to help manage our congregate living facilities and the patients who live there.

It’s basically going to help the entire community understand the nature of COVID better, help protect those who are at highest risk, and take better care of our population. Most importantly, continue to take care of yourself and those around you. And remember, Allina Health is your committed partner on your health journey.