



A family wearing face masks, amid concerns of the Covid-19 outbreak, walks before an Olympic rings sculpture at the national 'Birds Nest' stadium, the main site of the 2008 Beijing Olympics in Beijing on Monday. Following boycotts by Canada and Australia, the fate of his year's Summer Games, scheduled to be held in Tokyo in July, hangs in the balance.

PHOTO: AFP

Tokyo 2020 delay looms as Canada, Australia quit

REUTERS, Toronto/Tokyo



Major sporting nations Australia and Canada quit the Tokyo 2020 Olympics on Monday as organisers faced global pressure to postpone the Games due to the coronavirus crisis for the first time in their 124-year modern history.

Putting back the July 24-Aug. 9 event, as is looking inevitable, would be a massive blow for host Japan which has pumped in more than \$12 billion of investment in the run-up.

Huge sums are also at stake for sponsors and broadcasters.

But a groundswell of concern from athletes - already struggling to train as gyms, stadiums and swimming pools close around the world - appears to be tipping the balance, along with the cancellation of other major sports events.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Japanese government have both edged back from weeks of blanket insistence the

Games would go ahead, announcing a month-long consultation over other scenarios including postponement.

The Olympics have never before been delayed, though there were cancelled altogether in 1916, 1940 and 1944 during the World Wars and major Cold War boycotts disrupted the Moscow and Los Angeles Games in 1980 and 1984 respectively.

"The moment the IOC indicates that it is thinking about other solutions, it has already decided to delay the Games," said French Olympic Committee president Denis Masgella.

Canada and Australia both bluntly said they would not participate if the Games were not put back to 2021.

"We are in the midst of a global health crisis that is far more significant than sport," said Canada's Olympic Committee (COC) and Paralympic Committee (CPC) in a statement.

The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) also told its athletes to prepare for a Tokyo Games in 2021.

"Our athletes have been magnificent in their positive attitude to training and preparing, but the stress and uncertainty have been extremely challenging for them," said Australia's Olympics Chef de Mission Ian Chesterman.

Paralympic athletes were considered at particular risk from the epidemic given some had underlying health problems.

Various nations urged a quick decision from the IOC, which is led by its powerful president, Thomas Bach, a German lawyer and former Olympic fencing champion.

Athletes were broadly supportive of postponing the Games, though sad at seeing their dreams in doubt.

Monday's announcements followed growing pressure from big stakeholders including U.S. Track and Field, UK Athletics and other national Olympic committees.

"An Olympic Games in July this year is neither feasible nor desirable," World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe said. "We owe it to our athletes to give them respite where we can."

ANDERLECHT COACH FIRED OVER COVID-19

Belgian giant Anderlecht have fired assistant coach Par Zetterberg to save money as the coronavirus football lockdown starts to bite. The Brussels club say they fired the 49-year-old Swede due to major revenue losses since the championship was suspended because of coronavirus. "Professional football, as with many other economic endeavours, is faced with major challenges by COVID-19," Anderlecht told local media. "It is having a major economic impact on the club," said Anderlecht, who won their last three league games and sit eighth in the suspended league. "So that is why we are arming the club in the short term to better defend itself against major losses due to the championship being put on hold." That's why we had to part with Par Zetterberg who will be remembered as a giant here," the club said. Zetterberg, a former Sweden midfielder, played almost 300 games for the Brussels club in two stints.

-- AFP



Asensio wins Playstation tournament

REUTERS, Undated

Real Madrid forward Marco Asensio has missed the entire season with a serious knee injury but the time away from the pitch paid unexpected dividends when he was crowned champion of La Liga's FIFA 20 video game tournament on Sunday.

With Spanish soccer on hold along with most live sports while the world fights the coronavirus pandemic, players traded the pitch for Playstation in an online tournament organised by esports commentator Ibai Llanos and endorsed by La Liga.

Over 170,000 people watched Asensio, playing as Real, beat Aitor Ruibal of Leganes 4-1 in the final, the culmination of a weekend of action involving 18 La Liga sides.

Half of French clubs 'face bankruptcy'

AFP, Paris

Half of France's professional football clubs could go bankrupt due to the coronavirus crisis, a top official insisted on Sunday.

Bernard Caiazzo, president of the group which represents clubs in the French top flight, also said that the season will not resume until "at best on June 15".

"Without state aid, within six months, half of the professional clubs will file for bankruptcy," Caiazzo told France Bleu Loire.

No one was ready for this hell: Mancini

AGENCIES

Italy coach Roberto Mancini was disappointed Euro 2020 had to be called off but described the recent scenes in his country as "a punch in the face".

"In the past few weeks I called some of my players, especially those who are injured and ones in doubt," Mancini told Gazzetta dello Sport.

"I worked on the friendlies with England and Germany and I started setting up Euro 2020.

"I must admit that I felt disappointed when it was announced [that it was cancelled].

"The film of that military convoy that took the coffins away from Bergamo was a punch in the face, the hardest and most striking image.

"No one was ready for this hell. To think that people are dying because there's a lack of beds and respirators.

"I never even thought about leaving Italy, because I feel safe here and our medics are doing heroic work. I want to feel close to those who are in difficulty.

"And I say that as a simple citizen, not as someone who has a symbolic role in Italy."

Mancini said he was heartened by the displays of solidarity among Italian citizens being widely shared on social media, where videos of communities spontaneously bursting into song from their balconies have become popular.

"I like it very much," said the former Manchester City head coach. "It's the most authentic Italy. It represents us.

"It is we who give our best in difficult circumstances, when we hug, help and put all our humanity into play.

"These people, after so much pain and fear, would have deserved the European Championship to get distracted and start again."



PHOTO: AFP

A man walks past a large billboard raising awareness in the fight against coronavirus which shows a woman wearing Italy's national flag as a face mask for protective measures and reads "All together, without fear", in the streets of Naples on Sunday.

Special Supplement

Modern colorectal cancer care shaped by technological advances

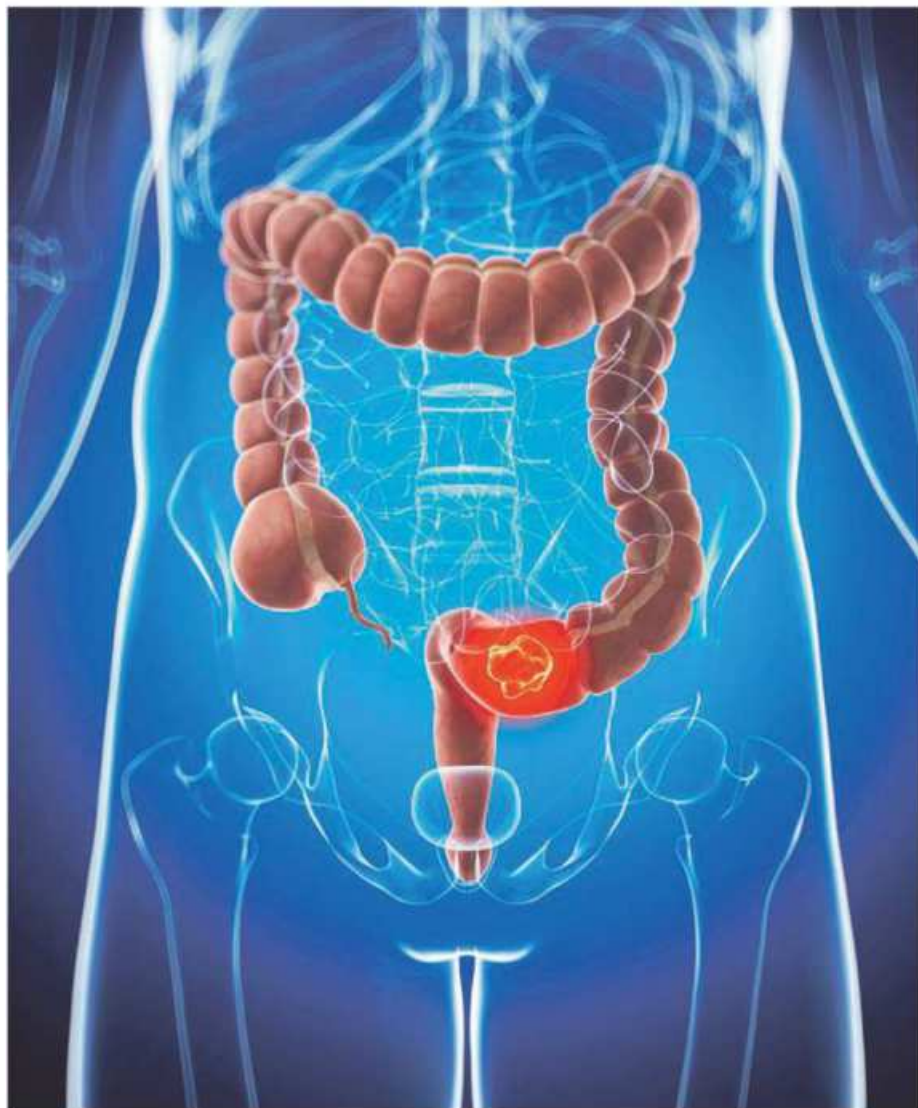
Colorectal cancer surgery no longer takes a one size-fits-all approach as advances in technology in recent years have led to a sea change in the way the disease is managed and treated

PATIENTS. AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO.®

The first surgeons may have been mediaeval barbers wielding nothing more than clean, sharp razors. But surgeons today use

highly sophisticated instruments, state-of-the-art operating systems, and imaging devices to perform highly complex and intricate procedures.

In surgery to remove colorectal cancer, surgeons aim for the best patient outcomes by offering smaller wounds and rapid recovery after



THE TREATMENT OF COLORECTAL CANCER IS INDIVIDUALISED TO EACH PATIENT, BASED ON THE STAGE, LOCATION AND EXTENT OF SPREAD OF EACH CANCER, AS WELL AS PATIENT FACTORS.

DR CHERYLIN FU, SENIOR CONSULTANT, DEPARTMENT OF COLORECTAL SURGERY, SINGAPORE GENERAL HOSPITAL.

surgery with minimal complications, while achieving complete cancer clearance with low recurrence rates.

With modern medicine, these ideals are possible, and most planned procedures in this field are safe and effective. The quality of life of a colorectal cancer patient has vastly improved over the past two decades, and this has largely been due to technological advancements in the medical field.

Over the last few decades, the management of colorectal cancer, especially rectal cancer, has evolved, with treatment and surgery no longer a one-size-fits-all approach. The treatment of colorectal cancer is individualised to each patient, based on the stage, location and extent of spread of each cancer, as well as patient factors.

Accurate staging

For the right treatment to be prescribed, it is critical to determine the stage of the cancer correctly. The current use of 3D high-resolution

ultrasound and high-resolution magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) allows surgeons to identify how deep the tumour has penetrated, and whether the disease has spread to the lymph nodes and adjacent organs.

Surgical staplers

The surgical stapler – another milestone in the development of colorectal surgery – allows surgeons to perform secure anastomoses (joining the cut ends of the intestine after the cancer has been removed) with fewer complications. Previously, anastomoses were hand-sewn and difficult to perform. With surgical staplers, colorectal anastomoses are consistent, safe, and heal well with fewer complications such as leaks. Modern staplers are constantly being improved, resulting in powered devices, adjustable heights and graduated compression. These enhance patient safety and surgical outcomes.

Minimally invasive surgery

The increasing use of minimally invasive surgery in treating colorectal cancer can be attributed to revolutionary advances in surgical optics, operating platforms, laparoscopic equipment and energy devices. Features like autofocus cameras, anti-fog lenses, flexible 3D and 4K or ultra-high definition laparoscopes provide clear views of the abdominal cavity and pelvis, allowing surgeons to perform more precise surgery.

New operating platforms are also available, such as robotic-assisted surgery where the surgeon sits

comfortably at a console, controlling high-definition 3D cameras and fine, highly dexterous cutting instruments, to perform difficult and complex



SingHealth is Singapore's largest healthcare group providing quality care across 4 hospitals, 5 national specialty centres and a network of primary care clinics. With over 40 medical specialties and a faculty of close to 4,000 doctors, it is recognised for the high quality of its healthcare services. An academic medical centre, Singapore institutions are recognised centres of excellence, integrating clinical care with research and education to transform care for its patients.

The Singapore General Hospital, one of the tertiary hospitals of the SingHealth Group, is Singapore's largest hospital. It offers multidisciplinary and seamless integrated care over a comprehensive range of clinical specialties. As a testament to its standard of quality and safety, SGH is accredited by the Joint Commission International. SGH also accounts for about one-fifth of acute beds in Singapore.

procedures like lateral pelvic node dissections.

Meanwhile, transanal platforms and single port devices allow minimally invasive colorectal resections to be performed using smaller and fewer incisions. The use of these platforms has become increasingly popular, and has paved the way for NOTES (Natural Orifice Transluminal Endoscopic Surgery) and NOSE (Natural Orifice Specimen Extraction) to become a reality. Such techniques, where operations are performed through the body's natural openings, were deemed dangerous and experimental not too long ago.

These new technologies not only benefit patients in terms of less pain, smaller wounds, less bleeding, faster return to normal function, and fewer adhesion-related complications, but also take into consideration the well-being of surgeons in terms of better ergonomics and less surgeon fatigue.

Energy devices

Surgical instruments and energy devices are important tools in the colorectal surgeon's practice.

Increasingly, laparoscopic instruments are being developed with more ergonomic and other advanced features to make work easier for surgeons. Energy devices, which are used to cut and dissect tissue, have features such as improved vessel sealing functions to reduce bleeding while minimising thermal injury to adjacent tissues.

Radiotherapy

Technology has also had an impact on radiotherapy, an important component in the multi-disciplinary treatment of colorectal cancer. Whole pelvic radiotherapy used to be associated with significant adverse reactions such as rectal inflammation and bleeding. However, with targeted radiotherapy techniques, such complications have reduced significantly in the last two to three decades.

Advanced radiation strategies with novel radiosensitisers, intensity-modulated radiotherapy, and high-dose-rate brachytherapy, are likely to be the next step in improving treatment while simultaneously reducing radiotherapy related toxicity.



public outreach and public awareness campaigns on colorectal and pelvic floor disorders in Singapore.

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