

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Schneider Hospital Suspends Certain Knee And Hip Implant Surgeries As Costs Mount

VIC News / **Published On March 10, 2016 10:17 AM /**

Staff **March 10, 2016**



ST. THOMAS -- As part of a broader effort to attain financial solvency, Schneider Regional Medical Center has suspended non-emergency knee and hip implant procedures, the hospital said through a press release issued on Wednesday. With the cost of implants increasing while reimbursements decrease, the decision was made to temporarily discontinue these non-emergency orthopedic implant procedures.

Funding and maintaining elective surgical implant programs is a problem nationwide, the release says. The difficulty lies in that the cost of procuring hip and knee devices has increased significantly and the reimbursement does not cover the costs. As an example, a knee implant may cost \$8,000 and the hospital may be reimbursed \$0 for the device.

Overall, the hospital may lose approximately \$10,000 on certain cases, according to the release.

"This decision is not one that was made lightly," said hospital CEO Bernard Wheatley. "Our hospital is struggling financially and we need to reduce or eliminate some services that take us further in to debt."

He added: "We must focus on funding the most critically needed services to ensure we can remain strong to serve the community over the long term."

As the only hospital in the St. Thomas/St John district, the leadership team understands that tough decisions must be made to ensure they can deliver emergency and/or life-saving care to those who need it, says the release.

Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Luis Amaro chimed in: "We realize there are many people in our community who will be affected by this decision. However it has come down to a choice between being able to provide life-saving care or elective surgeries. We choose to provide the highest quality of care we can to those whose lives depend on it."