



Clinician Update

January 23, 2025



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Today Is Maternal Health Awareness Day

This day nationally, **Jan. 23**, is dedicated to helping people learn about the maternal mortality crisis in the United States and what can be done to reduce the health risks for women giving birth. New Jersey has seen its national ranking for maternal mortality improve from 47th to 28th, although the state has a wide racial disparity for maternal mortality. And Virtua has been at the forefront of developing processes and protocols that identify and treat the conditions that can endanger a mother's life.

Virtua's overall statistics for cesarian sections for low-risk women have met the Healthy People 2030 target for the last four years. Likewise, in 2024, the percentage of women experiencing severe range blood pressure who received treatment within 60 minutes of onset exceeded the target of 80% at all three hospitals offering maternity services.

"These protocols reflect our work to apply critical thinking, to discern the most appropriate care plan, and to ensure equity. We have found new, effective techniques to identify potential problems earlier, and we quickly address those problems to ensure the best outcomes for mothers and babies," explained Nicole Lamborne, MD, Virtua's vice president of clinical operations for women's health.

Virtua Health Performed Record Total of Nearly 286,000 Surgeries in 2024

With a Virtua record number of hospital surgeries combined with those performed by Virtua's network of ambulatory surgery centers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, Virtua performed nearly 286,000 surgeries in 2024. The record year is nearly 12,000 more than last year.

Virtua's hospitals saw an increase of 8% more surgeries than the year previous. As for robotic surgery volume in the hospitals, it was also a record year, performing over a thousand more than last year. The ASCs performed 5% more surgeries than the previous year.

"This large number and continued growth represent how we are positively impacting our patients and their loved ones in the tri-state region and beyond, conveniently meeting our patients in their own communities, providing access to the highest quality ambulatory care" said Monte Goldstein, MD, chief medical officer, Virtua ASC Joint Ventures.

"In addition, it speaks to our focus on innovation, faster recovery, and less pain. And it says so much about the talented staff who tirelessly perform these surgeries around the clock, meeting the needs of those we serve," said Patty Lubrano, RN, MSN, FACHE, VMG vice president for operations, surgery, GI, and anesthesia service lines.

Seeking Clinicians for the Medical Staff Wellness Committee

As part of the ongoing work Virtua is doing around clinician well-being, we are in the process of launching a Medical Staff Wellness Committee. The purpose of establishing this committee is to evaluate the work environment, stressors, and professional needs of our clinicians and proactively implement strategies that improve the clinician experience, fuel fulfillment, and help avoid burnout. We are currently accepting interest and nominations for clinicians to serve on the Medical Staff Clinician Wellness Committee to ensure we have a well-rounded group that represents a range of clinical experience, time with Virtua, and demographics. This group will mirror the Wellness Committee that rolled out in late 2024 for VMG, whose scope is currently focused on Primary Care.

To learn more, nominate a clinician or to submit your own interest in being part of the Medical Staff Clinician Wellness Committee, please send an email to Samantha Paul (spaul@virtua.org), manager of credentialing services, by Friday, **Jan. 24**.

The Global Paradise System Ultrasound Post Approval Study

Virtua Research periodically shares trials for your consideration. The Paradise Ultrasound Renal Denervation System (Paradise System) is a catheter-based system that delivers ultrasound energy to thermally ablate and disrupt the renal afferent and efferent sympathetic nerves while sparing the inner arterial wall. The goal of ultrasound RDN is to achieve a reduction in sympathetic over-activity with the subsequent effect of reducing systemic arterial blood pressure (BP) and mitigating resultant end-organ damage. The Paradise System is indicated to reduce BP as an adjunctive treatment in hypertension patients in whom lifestyle modifications and antihypertensive medications do not adequately control BP.

Kintur Sanghvi, MD, FACC, FSCAI, chief of interventional cardiology, director of cardiovascular innovation, and medical director of the Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Catheterization Laboratory, is the principal investigator for this trial.

Here are just a few of the inclusion/exclusion criteria:

Inclusion:

Documented history of hypertension; documented history of prior or current antihypertensive medication(s); mean seated office systolic BP at screening >140 mmHg; mean seated home systolic BP at screening > 135 mmHg

Exclusion:

Lacks appropriate renal anatomy for any treatment with the Paradise catheter; has a transplanted kidney

If you have a patient who may meet the criteria above, please contact the Virtua Research team at research@virtua.org. A research coordinator will review their eligibility with you.

All in on Excellence 2025

We're excited to launch the first week of *All In on Excellence 2025* with the tip, [Everyone Counts: Helping Each Other | Practicing Excellence](#). All Virtua colleagues, regardless of their role or location, will focus on this tip.

Our partners at Practicing Excellence have automatically enrolled you in the program. You can access the program through the web platform or mobile app

under the "Progress" menu. If the program isn't listed under "My Programs," you can self-enroll by selecting "Join Program" and entering the code "Virtua2025."

To learn more:

- [View this kick-off video](#) from our chief clinical officer, Jennifer Khelil, DO.
- Visit the [Practicing Excellence page of Colleague Corner](#) to preview the program's tips and access supporting materials.

What Patients Are Saying About Our Clinicians

Confidence in care is a common reference among our clinician reviews. Note the following recent examples and how the patient felt about the experience, and the clinician referenced:

"Dr. Lauren Spivack was wonderful, professional, and so very respectful without judgement. She was empathetic to my current condition and was so helpful and kind. I have never been so impressed with a doctor's office in my life, from the moment I walked in. I feel they truly care about their patients, and I feel taken care of!" **(Lauren Spivack, MD)**

"Dr. Lam is phenomenal. She doesn't just see the numbers on a test, she sees you as a person. She explains all the options, listens to your thoughts on anything. She goes the extra mile every time. She's knowledgeable, very caring, and I can't say enough good about her. She's a role model." **(Eleanor Lam, MD)**

"Dr. Patel and the entire staff make me feel like I am the only patient that they have. I know that this isn't true, but everybody has been more than wonderful to me, and I want to say thank you." **(Bhavika Patel, MD)**

"It was our first appointment, and I had a ton of concerns I needed addressed. He listened to every single one and came up with a plan. I look forward to seeing him again for my health care." **(Jason McCarthy, APN)**

"Dr. Seth Stake performed a full hip replacement on me. I experienced immediate relief. For the first time in over 5 years, I am pain free. Dr. Stake truly cares about his patients. He takes the time to make sure all your questions are answered." **(Seth Stake, MD)**

Dr. Shailen Shah: Guiding Families and Inspiring the Next Generation

For more than 22 years, Shailen Shah, MD, has guided countless expectant families through their journey. In this episode of *Here for Good: Inside Edition*, President and CEO Dennis Pullin explores Dr. Shah's remarkable path from attending physician to medical director of maternal-fetal medicine and section chief of perinatology. Also, Virtua's recent affiliation with Rowan University has rekindled his passion for teaching, allowing him to mentor the next generation of clinicians. A champion of Practicing Excellence, Dr. Shah encourages everyone to continuously learn and grow. He inspires his team to be the best versions of themselves, and they in turn, bring out the best in him.

[Watch the full episode here](#).

Dr. Navneet Kaur Comments on Being Here for Good

At Virtua, being "Here for Good" means showing up for our community every day with compassion, expertise, and a commitment to making health care easier and lives better. Our clinicians often comment on the personal importance of Virtua's mission and culture. Hospitalist Navneet Kaur, MD, medical staff president of Virtua Mount Holly Hospital, recently shared a video expressing what it means to be Here for Good in this [Linkedin post](#). It is also [here](#) on YouTube.

HeartTalk Arrives in Homes This Week

HeartTalk is a quarterly magazine mailed to 127,000 households in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester counties. It aims to guide readers to follow a healthy lifestyle with expert advice on preventing and managing cardiovascular disease, weight management, and improving lung, digestive, reproductive, and emotional health—and much more.

Special thanks to the following clinicians participating in the winter 2025 issue: Daniel Tran, DO; Rick Heuser, LCSW; Samuel Wasser, MD; Erin Wickersham, RDN; Joanne Luczak-Marzo, APN-C; Amy Lombardo, APN-C; Aatish Garg, MD; Hafeza Shaikh, DO, FACC; James Crawford, MD; Catherine Kim, MD; Syed Riaz, MD; Justine Spisak-Mosher, DO; and Venkata Meka, DO.

The winter issue arrives in homes this week. Click [here](#) to read the digital version of the magazine. To view past issues, visit [here](#).

Virtua in the News

Rowan-Virtua Doctors to Enhance Care at Psychiatric Hospital

The N.J. Department of Health and Rowan University have launched a partnership to improve care at Ancora Psychiatric Hospital. The collaboration "will strengthen mental health services in South Jersey and bring academic medicine into one of the state's key behavioral health facilities," the story noted.

Physicians from Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine's department of psychiatry will join the medical staff at the 515-bed facility. The initiative will expand the hospital's capacity to provide specialized care using advanced, evidence-based practices.

The agreement "underscores our commitment to advancing both patient care and medical education, ensuring the highest standards of psychiatric care are accessible to those who need it most," said Richard Jermyn, DO, dean of Rowan-Virtua School of Medicine. Read in [ROI-NJ](#) and [Hospital Management](#).

Dr. Topiel Addresses the Surge of Norovirus

Martin Topiel, MD, Virtua's chief infection control officer, offered ways to reduce one's risk of catching norovirus. For example, thoroughly washing hands with soap and water—rather than hand sanitizer—and cleaning contaminated surfaces with bleach help prevent the illness from spreading. Watch on [CBS 3](#).

Dr. Kapoor Comments on the Potential Over-Reliance on A.I.

Tarun Kapoor, MD, Virtua's chief digital transformation officer, discussed how to avoid possible pitfalls of using artificial intelligence in medical tools. He predicted that "automation bias" will increase, and said that Virtua is taking steps to moderate clinicians' reliance on A.I. Read in [Medscape](#).

Pediatric Mobile Program in Spotlight

A story about the rise of mobile health clinics features Virtua's innovative Pediatric Mobile Services Program. Such initiatives "are bridging gaps in care, reducing health disparities, and redefining what it means to meet patients where they are," the article notes. Read in [The Engage Blog](#).

New Partnership Supports Families Experiencing Perinatal Loss

Virtua is working with the Diocese of Trenton, Bradley Funeral Home, and Jesus Bread of Life Cemetery to provide final resting places for infants who are stillborn and those lost during pregnancy. The Respectful Disposition Program also serves families who have lost a child up to the age of one. Ann Coyle,

manager of Virtua's Perinatal Bereavement Program, has led the creation of this program. Read in the [Trenton Monitor](#).

Important Upcoming Cybersecurity Changes

Virtua and Information Security continuously review its policies and seek ways to protect our patients' and employees' information. As part of our ongoing security upgrades, Virtua has established new policies to protect data on devices that access the Virtua network. This is called our Conditional Access Policy, and these changes will begin going into effect in a phased approach on Tuesday, **Jan. 28**, and run through Tuesday, **Feb. 25**.

Please note that if you currently access the Virtua network or any of its applications via Citrix these changes WILL NOT impact you. Only colleagues attempting to access Microsoft 365 desktop suite applications (Outlook, Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint) on personal (non-Virtua) PCs and laptops are impacted. If you want to access the Microsoft suite applications from a personal device, please visit portal.office.com and log in with your Virtua credentials (Microsoft Authenticator is required for this access). There is also nothing anyone needs to do to prepare for this policy change.

For a complete overview of who and what devices are impacted by this change, please visit [this article](#) posted on the Colleague Corner.

Thank you for your dedication to keeping our patient and colleague data safe.

Extra Cybersecurity Measure Now in Effect

This week, Virtua expanded its current geo-blocking policy to include blocking inbound connections from all countries, excluding the United States and Canada. The broadening of the current geo-blocking policy will assist in strengthening Virtua's security posture. Geo-blocking is used as a security measure to mitigate cyber threats by limiting access to services or data based on geographic location, effectively blocking potential malicious activity from regions known for high cybercrime.

How will this impact me?

The impact for extending the geo-blocking policy is around inbound connections (mostly remote access via Citrix web). Most Virtua colleagues and partners will not notice a difference in their everyday functions as Virtua has been leveraging geo-blocking for a few years for specific countries. But some clinicians may be

impacted during personal travel or vacations to locations that were previously permitted, which will now be blocked.

Why is this happening?

Virtua, like many organizations, is targeted frequently by cyber-attacks from around the world. These cybersecurity threats range from AI driven attacks, advanced phishing and social engineering tactics, as well as password spray and denial of service attacks. With the growing landscape of cyber-attacks, it is in the best interest of Virtua, our colleagues, patients, and partners to proactively apply security mitigations where possible.

What do I do if I have an issue after the geo-blocking policy is updated?

Please report the issue to the [IT Customer Portal](#).

CME: Liver Disease and Transplantation, Jan. 28

The Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine will host a CME session entitled "[Liver Disease and Transplantation](#)" on **Tuesday, Jan. 28**, from 12:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. in the Physician Conference Room at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. The live activity is designated for *3.75 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. The speakers include Simona Rossi, MD; Ashraf Malek, MD; and Ely Sebastian, MD.

The target audience for this activity is physicians, physician assistants, advanced nurse practitioners, medical residents, medical fellows, and nurses.

To register, go to The Virtua Learning System (VLS) and search "Liver Disease and Transplantation." For more information, click [here](#).

CME: Quarterly Weight Management Grand Rounds, Jan. 29

The CME session Quarterly Weight Management Grand Rounds will help participants define obesity as a chronic disease, review the medical risks associated with obesity, and discuss treatment options for obesity. The virtual event will take place on **Wednesday, Jan. 29**, from 7 to 8 a.m., and will feature speaker Susan Varevice-McAndrew, DO, of the Virtua Complete Weight Management Program and diplomat of the American Board of Obesity Medicine. For more information, click [here](#) for a printable flyer. To join the event, click [here](#).

IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

[International Day of Commemoration/Holocaust Remembrance](#) is commemorated annually on **Jan. 27**, this year being 80 years since the end of World War II and the Holocaust. This year's theme is *Holocaust Remembrance for Dignity and Human Rights*.

From **Jan. 29 to Feb. 12**, many will celebrate [Lunar New Year](#), also known as **Chinese New Year**. The observance includes association with animals of the Chinese zodiac, with this year being the year of the snake.



Virtua Health

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