

Clinician Update

Jan. 20, 2022

This Coming Tuesday Jan. 25: COVID-19 Status Webinar for Virtua Clinicians

[Please join us for an update](#) on Virtua's response to the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in our community. We will review the latest data, epidemiology, therapeutic options, and surgical plans, as well as vaccination and testing resources. The hour-long meeting, to be hosted by Virtua EVP and Chief Clinical Officer Reginald Blaber, MD, will cover the many important topics now confronting us.

Agenda:

- *Introduction*
Reginald Blaber, MD, EVP and Chief Clinical Officer
- *State of the House*
Jennifer Khelil, DO, SVP and Chief Medical Officer
- *Epidemiology; outpatient clinical treatments; evusheld; monoclonal antibodies for prevention against infection in the immunosuppressed; oral antiviral therapy (who, what, where); monoclonal antibodies for risk individuals*
Martin Topiel, MD, FSHEA, Virtua Infection Control Officer, and Samuel Weiner, MD, VP Clinical Operations
- *Overview of how surgery has met the present COVID challenge; surgical plans going forward; present rules of engagement regarding testing, quarantine, rescheduling COVID-19+ cases; current blood shortage*
Howard Winter, MD, VP Surgical Practice and Outcomes
- *Testing & vaccination sites*
Samuel Weiner, MD, VP Clinical Operations

The meeting will be held on **Tuesday, Jan. 25 at 6 p.m.** A quick registration is required. To register for the Teams meeting, [click here](#).

Virtua Launches “Hospital at Home” Program for Select Patients

Virtua Health officially launched its Hospital at Home program yesterday. Initially, the program will be offered to patients recovering from COVID-19 whose treatment can safely transition from the med-surg unit of Virtua Voorhees Hospital to the comfort of their homes. In the weeks to follow, the program will expand to include additional Virtua hospitals and extend to health conditions beyond COVID-19.

“We have spent several months developing our Hospital at Home program. Our original plan was to launch the service in late February, but the current COVID surge required us to accelerate the timeline in order to support our staff and community,” said John Matsinger, DO, MBA, executive vice president and chief operating officer. “In time, this program will be a cornerstone of our care portfolio. You can think of it as our sixth hospital—one that is dedicated to remote, virtual care.”

“For several years, Virtua has challenged itself to orient to the consumer and transform its delivery models,” added Michael W. Capriotti, senior vice president of integration and strategic operations. “With Hospital at Home, soon we will no longer require certain patient populations to come to the hospital. Instead, we will bring the hospital to them.”

Hospital at Home will allow patients to receive hospital-level care from home. While the plan-of-care will be specific to the individual, most participants will experience:

- Twice-daily visits from Hospital-at-Home clinicians
- Remote monitoring using a variety of Virtua-issued devices
- Routine remote consultations with a physician or other licensed provider
- Around-the-clock support from the Hospital at Home Command Center
- Easy-to-heat nutritious meals (optional)
- Relevant clinical and ancillary services that would otherwise be provided in the hospital (imaging, pharmacy, lab, therapy, etc.)

Not all patients with COVID are candidates for Hospital at Home, and participation is optional. To get inspired about this innovative approach to care, please watch this [video](#). Stay tuned for additional updates on this new approach to traditional care.

Important COVID-19 Testing and Monoclonal Antibody Updates

When it comes to testing and the possible usage of monoclonal antibody treatment, we provide below the protocols we are now following. (These protocols will be reviewed in next week's [COVID-19 Status Webinar for Virtua Clinicians](#).)

COVID-19 testing for symptomatic patients: As of Friday, Jan. 14, all scheduling for symptomatic patients to be tested for COVID-19 at the HEC is being done online through Virtua's self-scheduling portal, [Community COVID-19 Testing | Virtua Health](#).

- VMG Clinicians should **NOT** use the COVID-19 order smartset in Epic to arrange for outpatient testing.
- ALL patients, VMG or non-VMG, should be directed to the above link to self-schedule testing.
- Results (both positive and negative) will be sent directly to the patient via MyChart. Therefore, a Virtua MyChart account is required to receive test results.
- Patients will receive written isolation instructions for both positive and negative result scenarios prior to leaving the HEC.
- HEC testing is for symptomatic patients only.
- There are no changes at this time for pre-op patient testing.

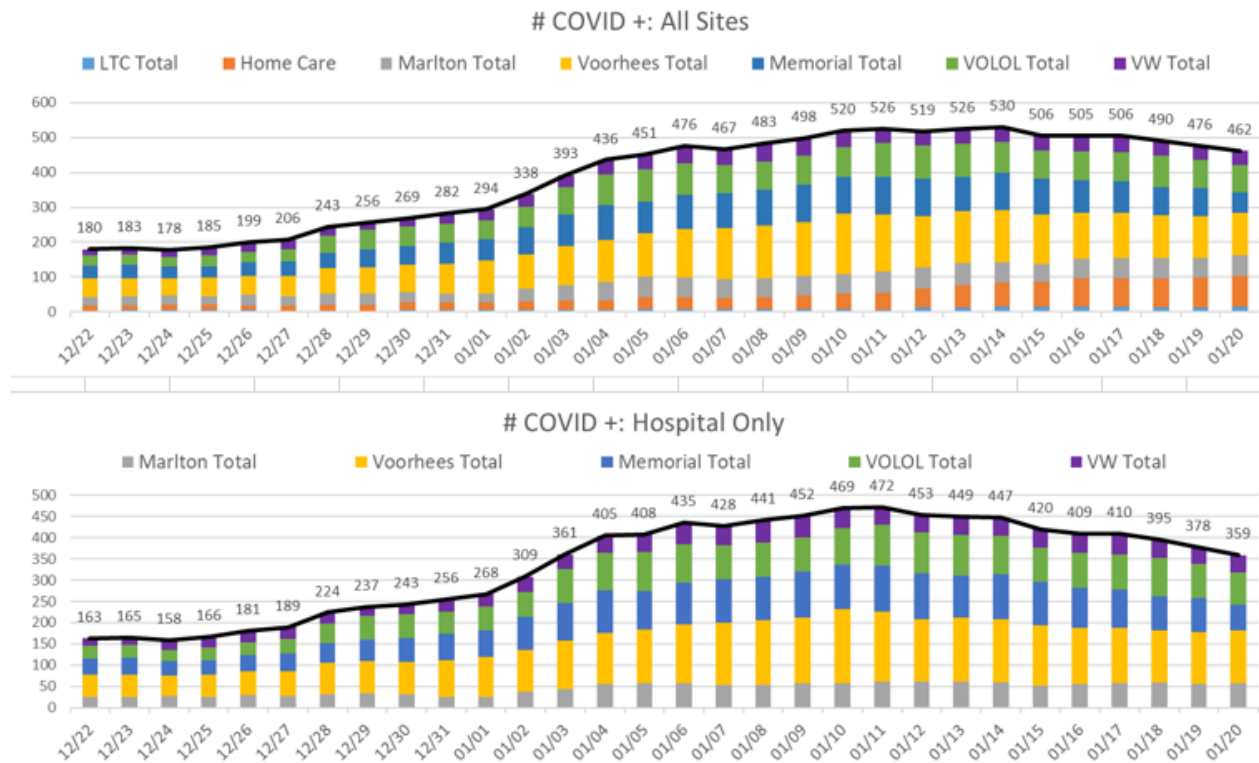
Monoclonal Antibody Infusion: Note that as drug supply is limited, patients at highest risk (immunocompromised or pregnant patients) will be prioritized. Inclusion criteria for possible monoclonal antibody treatment has been expanded, effective immediately, back to the previous set of risk factors, including:

- Immunosuppression
- Pregnancy
- 18 years old or older with diabetes, CKD, BMI 26 or above, HTN, CVD, COPD, or other chronic lung disease
- 65 years old or older
- Sickle cell disease
- Neurodevelopmental disorder
- Medical-related technological dependence (trach, etc.)

VMG Clinicians, please utilize the EPIC monoclonal antibody referral to refer a patient to the monoclonal antibody team. A tip sheet for the EPIC monoclonal antibody referral can be found by clicking [HERE](#). The monoclonal antibody team will attempt to call qualifying patients as soon as possible.

- Non-VMG clinicians should call **856-325-3150** in order to place a referral for consideration of monoclonal antibody treatment.
- Patients calling for themselves can also use that number or **1-888-VIRTUA 3**.
- Callback time may be greater than 24 hours—some patients, based on risk level, may not receive a call if there is not sufficient medication to infuse.
- It is imperative to remind patients to please answer the phone even if it is a phone number that they may not recognize.
- Encourage patients that have access to receive treatment at another facility to pursue all possible treatment options.

COVID-19 Census



Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey is 0.83, continuing the downward trend. The total number of cases are as follows:
 - Burlington County: 76,059 cases
 - Camden County: 96,382 cases
 - Gloucester County: 50,410 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, and Gloucester counties: 3,248.
- The state’s Vaccination Overview dashboard reported 15,972,977 doses of vaccine have been administered.

National Sports Voice Touts Lifesaving Vaccines: Stephen A. Smith Includes Thanks for Virtua

Sportscaster and friend of Virtua Health Stephen A. Smith returned to ESPN's "First Take" on Monday and described his harrowing ordeal with COVID-19.

While acknowledging that some people contract COVID-19 and experience only minor, passing symptoms, Smith said he had a persistent fever, headaches, and an unrelenting cough—which resulted in hospitalization and a long, ongoing recovery.

According to the broadcaster, his care team told him he survived because he was vaccinated. [Smith received the vaccine back in March](#) at the former Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega-Site in Moorestown.

He also emphasized the importance of mask-wearing and gave a shout-out to Virtua leadership, seen here in this [clip from Monday's "First Take."](#)

Gov. Phil Murphy Signs Executive Order Requiring Health Care Workers to be Vaccinated, Boosted

Gov. Phil Murphy announced on Wednesday that health care workers in New Jersey and others who have jobs in "high-risk congregate settings," including long-term care and correctional facilities, will need to be **vaccinated and boosted** against COVID-19.

The newest order requires people in these professions to be fully vaccinated and boosted while leaving some exemptions for those with disabilities, medical conditions or "deeply held religious beliefs," Gov. Murphy said.

Rates of infection and hospitalization for those with boosters is more than three times lower than for those who have only a primary vaccination.

For those who have already completed the first course of vaccine shots, booster shots will be required by **Feb. 28** for health care workers and **March 30** for those in congregate settings, or within three weeks of when the worker becomes eligible for a booster.

Virtua will provide guidance and instructions on how it will adhere to the governor's orders in the weeks ahead. Look for ongoing updates in future editions of this newsletter and on the VINE.

Top COVID-19 Questions Answered by Dr. Martin Topiel

In light of Gov. Phil Murphy's executive order (above), we asked **Dr. Martin Topiel**, Virtua Health chief infection control officer, to answer a few of our colleagues' top questions about COVID-19 booster shots.

If vaccinated people still get COVID-19, what is the benefit of boosters? The vaccines have been incredibly successful in preventing severe disease, hospitalizations, and mortality. Let's go back to early 2020, a terrible time when health systems were overwhelmed by people from all walks of life dying from COVID or experiencing severe illness.

Vaccinations have changed that scenario. This has become a pandemic of the unvaccinated as far as hospitalizations go. Unfortunately, there are some vulnerable and immunocompromised people who

can't respond to the vaccine properly. And those people are unfortunately at a greater risk and may require significant medical intervention.

But the overwhelming majority of vaccinated and boosted people who develop COVID can heal at home rather than the hospital.

If several months, at least four, have passed since you became "fully vaccinated" (meaning two doses of Pfizer or Moderna), your immune response to the omicron variant specifically may be at risk. Further boosting will produce overwhelming levels of antibodies to prevent the more serious potential outcomes.

It's worth mentioning that the value of boosters is well established. Most vaccines require several doses to render immunity—this is why children receive four doses of the DTaP vaccine before their second birthday. It's also why we get tetanus shots every 10 years and a flu shot every year. Most vaccines have a limited lifespan and the COVID vaccine is no different.

Will people need a *second* booster in the spring? Will this be an ongoing thing? It's unclear whether further boosters will be necessary. Israel, for example, is trialing extra boosters for its citizens.

The need for further vaccinations will likely be determined by any forthcoming variants and their distinct properties. Studies out of Columbia University and elsewhere provided evidence that omicron, for instance, had "immune escape mechanisms," which essentially means it more easily evaded the immune protection provided by vaccines and natural infection than earlier variants—hence why Pfizer is developing an omicron-specific vaccine.

Since we can't know what variants might be on the horizon, we should all take personal responsibility to protect ourselves and others now. It's nothing new: Get vaccinated, wear a mask, social distance, and so forth. It's exhausting to hear the same message, but those safety measures are as crucial now as they have ever been.

Should people get a booster dose if they recently had COVID? Do they have natural immunity? The challenge with natural immunity is that it is impossible to quantify or measure. You may have *some* protection, but how much? How long will it last? No one can answer those questions. The booster, by contrast, provides necessary added protection, which has been demonstrated in multiple studies. It can only help.

The transmission rate in New Jersey has dipped below 1.0 for the first time in quite a while. What does that mean to you? When the transmission rate was at its highest during this current surge—about 1.92 on Jan. 1—that meant that every person who contracted COVID infected one, perhaps two, additional people, on average. Now that the rate is closer to 0.83, that means that for every 10 people with COVID, only 8 or so will pass it on to another person. It's not great, but it puts us in the "low" margin for a first time in a while and suggests things are moving in the right direction.

This should directly translate to fewer hospital admissions for COVID-19.

While I am pleased to see this downswing, I maintain concern that another variant could come along and repeat this ordeal. Just as omicron swept in on the heels of delta, we remain vulnerable to additional variants if we don't take all safety measures available to us.

Insurance Now Covers At-Home COVID-19 Testing Kits

Americans with health insurance can get up to eight at-home COVID-19 tests for free thanks to a new federal requirement. Since Saturday, private health plans have been required to cover the over-the-counter tests at up to \$12 per test. Consumers can either purchase the testing kits at no cost or submit receipts for reimbursement from the insurance company. Click [here](#) for a news report.

A family of five could be reimbursed for up to 40 tests per month under the plan. PCR tests and rapid tests ordered or administered by a health provider will continue to be fully covered by insurance with no limit.

Individuals are encouraged to check their insurers' websites for additional information. Aetna updated [its website](#) with frequently asked questions about the new requirement. The site said more information on how members can submit claims will soon be available.

Additionally, the federal government has launched [COVIDTests.gov](#), where Americans can order free COVID-19 tests. The tests, which are meant to help tackle the record surge in infections, will be mailed to homes within seven to 12 days through the U.S. Postal Service.

Pulmonology Today Now Posted to Digital 411

Virtua's most recent issue of the *Today* series of physician education newsletters is particularly timely. Our most recent issue, [Pulmonology Today](#) features Virtua's utilization of new bronchoscopic technology that permits remotely controlled access to tissue samples for cancer diagnosis and redirection of airflow to healthier lung tissue in COPD. It also highlights Virtua's leadership in the use of oral medications for the treatment of COVID-19.

Remember that our library of publications has a home base on [Digital 411](#), found under "[Additional Resources/Clinician Publications.](#)" There, you can find archived copies of *Clinician Update*, as well as a growing resource of the *Today* series.

MyChart Proxy Access for a Child's COVID-19 Lab Results

With more children requiring COVID-19 tests, using MyChart is proving to be key for families to quickly access results. As you communicate with your patients, let them know that with a MyChart account, parents and guardians can track their child's COVID-19 lab results once they are available by setting up Proxy Access.

To set up Proxy Access for a child, the user would choose the **Menu** and scroll down to **Sharing > Minor Proxy Access Request Form**. Once the Proxy Access is confirmed, the parent or guardian can expect to find their child's health information, including COVID-19 lab results.

The results are located in one of two sections depending on the age of the child:

- For children (newborns up to and including age 11), results can be found in two places:
 - Menu > My Record > Test Results**
 - Menu > My Record > COVID-19**
- For teens between age 12 and 17, results can be found under the adolescent's name at:
 - Menu > MyRecord > Recent COVID-19 Results**

Note that result notifications can be delivered directly to a phone or email by setting Proxy notifications. Users would have to make sure their communications preferences are set within MyChart. A user can update preferences at:

Menu > Account Settings > Communications Preferences

More information on proxy access and interpreting results can be [found here](#).

Hello Good Happenings: The 5 North Team “Steps Up” to Help

It was an exciting morning on Jan. 15 when the fire alarms accidentally went off in the 5 North med/surg unit at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. While colleagues investigated the glitch, the food services team was in the middle of delivering breakfast trays to patients.

With the elevators down due to the fire alarm situation, the 5 North team (literally) stepped up to help the food services team by starting a chain in the stairwell—from the basement to the 6th floor. The food service workers, nurses, CNAs, unit secretaries, and others passed up trays to get breakfast to each patient.

“This was great exercise first thing in the morning!” says Erin Fleming, unit secretary. “An amazing group of men and women work here. I am so impressed with our teamwork and amazing attitude. This is exactly why I continue to work here; I have a phenomenal group of co-workers!”

Click to [view a short video](#) that shows the team effort. It may be blurry, but it shows how quickly our colleagues responded to support patient care.

Natalie Rotella, RN, who submitted the video, echoed Erin’s sentiments. “Our team is amazing! We definitely come together and work together, especially in times of great need.”

Virtua Health’s Way of Honoring MLK

Earlier this week marked Martin Luther King Day. Virtua colleagues honored his legacy by volunteering at and for various organizations.

Dr. Denee “Donee” Thomas-Patterson is part of Jack and Jill of America, a service organization for moms and their children. The local group Dr. Thomas-Patterson helps to lead has dedicated itself to supporting the Morgan Village Middle School in Camden.

On Monday, Dr. Thomas-Patterson and about 70 volunteers participated in a number of projects for the school, which included painting rocks for an indoor garden, assembling calming kits, decorating a serenity room, and creating an interactive Black History Month mural.

“It’s important to give back to the community. I really emphasized to the kids that this isn’t a day to stay home, it’s a day to get out there and help someone else,” said Dr. Thomas-Patterson.

Also in Camden, April Schetler, AVP of Community Health Engagement, spent her evening serving dinner at Cathedral Kitchen. She posted on Instagram, “Feeling privileged to have been able to serve dinner to the @cathedralkitchen guests. Honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. by serving others a hot and delicious

meal... all in the company of my @virtuahealth and @cathedralkitchen family. #hereforgood #hellogood”

Over in Voorhees, the Surgical Center of South Jersey, a Virtua joint-venture ambulatory surgery center, stopped by the local Animal Orphanage to drop off donations. The Animal Orphanage gave them a shout out on Facebook: “Wow! We are so humbled by the outpouring of generosity and love that we received today. Thank you to our friends at the Surgical Center of South Jersey for coming by with a ton of much needed supplies.”

Continue to share your good work and good vibes at Virtua and in the community. We encourage you to post on your own social accounts or the Virtua Colleague Group on Facebook. Please tag @virtuahealth and use hashtag #hellogood. You can also email hellogood@virtua.org. We will send you a free Hello Good tote bag while supplies last!

Celebrating CRNAs, Our Trusted Anesthesia Experts on the Frontlines

National CRNA Week is Jan. 23 to 29, a great opportunity to acknowledge certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) for their ongoing commitment to patient safety.

Nurse anesthetists have been providing anesthesia care to patients for more than 150 years. The CRNA credential came into existence in 1956, and CRNAs have earned a reputation for their specialized skills in airway management, intubation, advanced patient assessment, and excellent patient safety record. At Virtua, there are 128 CRNAs across all our hospital campuses, and we recognize them for providing world class care to our patients.

“It is my honor to salute these talented colleagues who in their profession make such a positive impact in the healing of our patients,” says Aland Lee, MD, chairman of the Department of Anesthesia, South Campus. “A big thank you for your heroic work and your constant readiness to provide your expert care.”

To learn more about National CRNA Week, [click here](#) for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA).

A Gift of Gratitude After COVID Care

When a patient receives life-saving care delivered with compassion, expressing gratitude for that care is uplifting and healing for the patient’s family and loved ones. Virtua Access Center supervisor Ivy Williams knows firsthand how care delivered during a pandemic inspires hope and gratitude. Her husband, Richard, was a COVID-19 patient hospitalized at Virtua Voorhees.

In gratitude for the care Richard received, Ivy made a gift to honor the care teams who treated her husband, including the ICU and PCU teams, saying she wanted to honor *“the extraordinary people on the front lines who worked hard, so my husband was able to come home. Not only was he cared for, but no one ever seemed bothered by my countless calls. Everyone was kind, patient, and extremely helpful.”*

Click [here](#) to hear Ivy and Richard's inspiring story, in Ivy's own words. Visit virtua.org/gratitude to learn more about how we invite our community to make a lasting impact through philanthropy.