

Clinician Update

Jan. 27, 2022

In Case You Missed It: COVID-19 Status Webinar for Virtua Clinicians

Virtua senior leaders [held a webinar this past Tuesday](#) detailing the latest information on our system's response to the COVID-19 surge. The meeting, hosted by Executive VP and Chief Clinical Officer Dr. Reg Blaber, covered important topics such as the latest data, epidemiology, therapeutic options, and surgical plans, as well as vaccination and testing resources. It also offered the opportunity to answer many of your questions. The program included:

- Senior VP and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jennifer Khelil, who presented on the “state of the house,” providing the latest numbers of cases in our hospitals.
- Infection Prevention Officer Dr. Martin Topiel gave an update on the latest treatment options, including Evusheld, monoclonal antibodies, oral antiviral therapy, and more.
- VP Clinical Surgical Practice & Outcomes Dr. Howard J. Winter provided an update for proceduralists. (See summary below.)
- VP of VMG Clinical Operations Dr. Sam Weiner shared the latest information on Virtua's COVID testing and vaccinations sites.

[Click here to view a recording](#) of this very important webinar. [Click here to view the presentation slide deck](#), now posted to 411.

Surgical Services: Update for Proceduralists

During Tuesday's webinar, Dr. Howard J. Winter, vice president for surgical practice & outcomes, presented on how our surgical services are proceeding in this stage in the pandemic. As a follow up, he shared this message today:

COVID-19 hospitalizations continue to decrease slowly, but our hospital census remains high. We are currently able to perform all outpatient procedures, and our ability to perform cases requiring overnight or inpatient stays has increased to near-normal levels.

Please resume scheduling cases normally in all divisions going forward. Priority should be given to cases which were postponed, as well as urgent cases. Please do not try to “catch up” on postponed cases all at once by overloading your schedules and putting excess stress on the system.

I take this opportunity to remind you all that there continues to be a serious shortage of blood and blood products across the country and locally, due to decreased donations. Our blood bank requests the following:

1. Do not transfuse more than one unit without checking a post-transfusion hemoglobin, unless the patient is rapidly bleeding.
2. If you know your case will need transfusion of greater than 2 to 3 units of blood, please postpone it for the next two weeks, if at all possible.
3. If postponement is not possible, please notify the blood bank several days before the case that you expect to need to transfuse greater than 2 to 3 units of blood.
4. **If you can, please donate blood.** [Here is a link to locate a site near you.](#)

We appreciate your understanding of the situation, and again thank you for all you do to keep our patients, our staff, and yourselves safe.

For additional information or questions, contact Dr. Winter at hwinter@virtua.org.

New Hospital Visitation Guidelines Now in Effect

Virtua has updated its hospital visitation protocols. General visitation is currently limited to one visitor per patient per day. We request that visits are limited to no more than two hours. General visiting hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at all Virtua hospitals. And, we strongly encourage all visitors to be fully vaccinated (and boosted) against COVID-19.

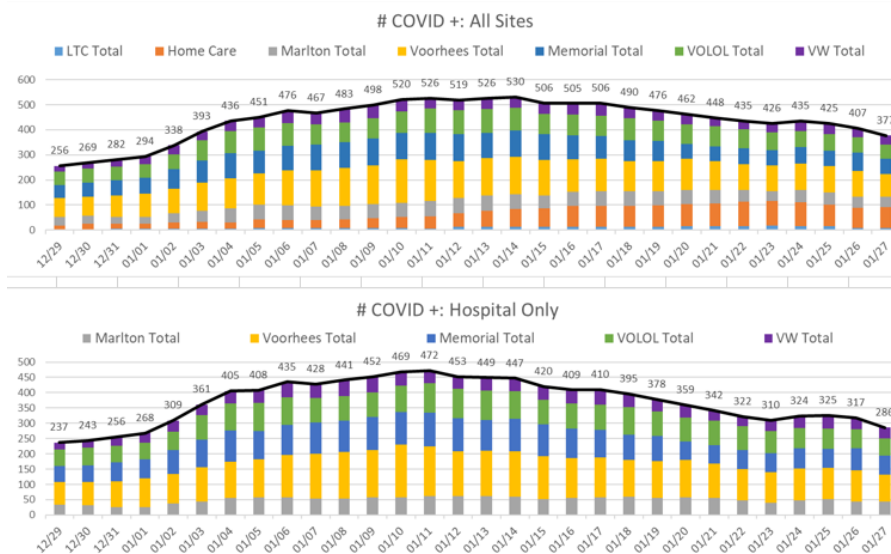
- Facemasks and other appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are required for all visitors in all areas of our facilities.
- Visitors must wear either two ear-loop masks, one ear-loop mask under a cloth mask, or a KN95 mask. Virtua has ear-loop masks available for visitors.
- Visitors must sanitize their hands often to protect their loved one and our staff.
- Visitors must participate in temperature checks and COVID-19 screening protocols administered by our staff upon entering the facility.
- If visiting a patient in a semi-private room, if both beds are occupied, the visitor must draw the curtain between the beds and keep his/her mask on at all times.
- Visitors must be 18 years or older.
- Visitors who do not satisfy these requirements, or who show signs of illness—even mild sickness, such as coughing and/or cold-like symptoms—will be required to leave.

Because the omicron variant is more transmissible than previous strains of COVID-19, visitors are asked not to eat or drink in patient rooms or in the cafeteria. We encourage visitors to eat before or after their visit to the hospital to minimize the need to remove masks.

Additional limitations/exceptions related to the above requirements may be considered depending on the circumstances, and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

For a list of department-specific visitation guidelines—including those for same-day surgery, emergency departments, labor and delivery, NICU, and more—please click [here](#). Click to view the “[Face Mask Requirements](#)” and “[New Visitor Guidelines](#)” flyers.

COVID-19 Census



Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey was last reported yesterday as 0.58, down significantly from previous weeks.
- The total number of cases as of 5 p.m. today:
 - Burlington County: 78,786 cases
 - Camden County: 99,552 cases
 - Gloucester County: 52,062 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, and Gloucester counties: 3,330.
- The state’s Vaccination Overview dashboard last reported 16,193,091 doses of vaccine have been administered.

Team Performs Record Number of Transplants in 2021

The Virtua Advanced Transplant and Organ Health team reached a milestone in 2021, performing the most transplants in the program’s 47-year history.

The team performed 68 organ transplants: 44 kidneys, six kidney-pancreases, two liver-kidneys, and 16 livers. Congratulations to the entire clinical team, including transplant nephrologists Manasa Ujire, MD, and Anita Mehrotra, MD; transplant hepatologists Hisham ElGenaidi, MD, Nyan Latt, MD, Ashraf Malek, MD, and Manish Thapar, MD; and surgeons Ely Sebastian, MD, John Radomski, MD, and Nasser Youssef, MD.

“Getting to this number in this climate, competing against larger transplant centers in the city, is a big milestone,” said Christine Palms, MS, RN, vice president of transplant services. “We have a great team who are engaged with our patients.”

The team attributes the milestone to a variety of factors, including aggressively pursuing donor organs from farther distances, and the willingness to transplant complex cases, such as those involving advanced vascular issues.

“Over the years, we’ve built a highly qualified team of individuals, both within the program and hospital as a whole,” said Alan Pope, MD, vice president and chief medical officer of Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes

Hospital. “They are utilizing the latest techniques and science, which has allowed us to operate on really sick people with great outcomes.”

While Virtua is the only provider of kidney, pancreas, and liver transplants in South Jersey, it competes for listings with larger transplant centers in Philadelphia and northern New Jersey. For 2021 in particular, the team instituted a number of program optimizations, including added staff, new allocation rules that gave the program access to organs from a greater geographic area, internal changes made to policies on the types of donated organs and patients accepted, and an increased number of referrals from area physicians and dialysis centers.

Dr. Sebastian, chief of transplant surgery, said the ability to transplant hepatitis C-positive organs into hepatitis C-negative recipients through the use of post-surgical direct-acting antivirals expanded the number of organs available, while the vascular expertise of Dr. Youssef, surgical director of kidney and pancreas transplantation, has allowed them to perform even the most complex cases.

“We have a perfect team. We have a vascular surgeon, transplant surgeons, and dedicated nephrologists and hepatologists. We discuss every single case, and you can see the results,” said Dr. Sebastian. “To do a transplant, we need to talk to everyone: organ procurement organizations, our transfer center, admissions, lab, nursing and OR staff. Our communication keeps getting better and better.”

Relationships with patients and families also play a role.

“We’ve always prided ourselves on our personal relationship with our patients, helping them every step of the way, said Janine Vallen, RN, MSN, CCTN, APN-C, director of transplant services. “We sit with each patient, allowing them that personal time for Q&A. It’s a big decision, and a lot of information. They can reach everyone by phone. They are not just a number.”

“The team spent a lot of sleepless nights to make this milestone happen,” said Dr. Ujire, medical director of kidney and pancreas transplantation. “We are aggressive in pursuing organs we think we can transplant, and have done transplants involving high-risk vascular procedures that others have not. For someone in South Jersey, there is no reason to go across the river for a transplant.”

MyChart “Your Hospital Stay” Guide Improves Patient Experience

A relatively new advancement in MyChart access has been the development of a tool that allows MyChart users having a hospital stay to engage in their care from their hospital bed. When a patient is admitted to the hospital or placed in observation, a new section labeled “Your Hospital Stay” automatically activates in their personal and secure MyChart application, giving them access to additional information and features such as:

- Watch the Welcome to Virtua video
- View their medications, as well as what labs, imaging, and procedure orders were placed
- See who is a part of their care team
- View their hospital and home medication lists with links to additional education material
- View their test results (Note: Cures Act-related alerts send patients results, sometimes before their clinician has had a chance to review them)
- Review and interact with education topics

- Submit a Daisy Award nomination
- Find additional resources (such as information about their Virtua Hospital, phone, free wireless internet, a hospital menu and ordering instructions, the gift shop, a link to the CaringBridge patient website, and Spiritual Care)

Users continue to have access to the standard MyChart features and menu items.

Colleagues are encouraged to share all the ways patients can stay engaged with the care during a hospital stay. Colleagues are also available to assist with sending MyChart activation codes to any patient that does not have a MyChart account. If you, or your patients, would like more information, visit the [MyChart Your Hospital Stay](#) page on Virtua.org.

Surveying Your Expertise: *U.S. News & World Report* Announces Key Dates

U.S. News & World Report has released its time schedule for its Best Hospitals survey, which assesses which hospitals are among the best at providing care. A vital component of those scores derive from surveyed physicians voting via [Doximity](#), the online networking service for medical professionals.

Key dates are as follows:

- **January-February 2022** – Children's hospitals participate in the Pediatric Hospital Survey.
- **Late February-March 2022** – Eligible physicians will be surveyed online via the Doximity-hosted survey instrument for both pediatric and adult specialties.
- **Late March-Mid April 2022** – 2022-23 Best Hospitals ranking attribution credits will be available for review in the [Hospital Dashboard](#).
- **Thursday, May 26, 2022** – 2022-23 Best Children's Hospitals embargoed rankings will be available in the [Hospital Dashboard](#) and [Hospital Data Insights](#).
- **Tuesday, June 14, 2022** – 2022-23 Best Children's Hospitals will be live on www.usnews.com.
- **Thursday, July 7, 2022** – 2022-23 Best Hospitals embargoed adult rankings and ratings will be available in the [Hospital Dashboard](#) and [Hospital Data Insights](#).
- **Tuesday, July 26, 2022** – 2022-23 Best Hospitals adult rankings and ratings will be live on www.usnews.com.

Yet to be announced, but expected soon, are the key dates for the 2022-23 Best Hospitals for Maternity. Virtua's reputation for excellence was recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2021-2022 on its inaugural list of Best Hospitals for Maternity Care.

Also in the 2021-2022 rankings, Virtua Voorhees and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes hospitals scored among the best performing hospitals in New Jersey and the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area. Both hospitals— as well as Virtua Memorial Hospital in Mount Holly—were recognized as top performers in the treatment of specific medical conditions, including COPD, diabetes, heart failure, and kidney disease.

How to participate:

Eligible physicians who are registered with Doximity will receive an email when the online survey is accessible to them. You are welcome to participate, but there is no obligation to do so.

Also this year, physicians will be able to participate in the survey if they have registered for Doximity at any point prior to the end of the 2022 survey period. So, if you have not yet claimed your Doximity

profile, you can do so now and join over 1 million health care professionals at doximity.com. Need to know how to establish your Doximity profile? [Just follow the instructions here.](#)

Next Up on *Real Talk! Women's Health Chats*:

Heart-to-Heart: Keeping Your Physical and Emotional Hearts Healthy

Thursday, February 3 at 7 p.m.

Our *Real Talk!* series will delve into the strong connection between heart health and mental health. We in the clinical world know that when depression, anxiety, and everyday stress become overwhelming, it can put added strain on the heart—which can increase the risk for heart disease. Virtua cardiologist, Rozy Dunham, MD, and holistic health coach, Karen Wolfe, will share lessons on how to keep the mind calm and the heart healthy. Registration is required to receive the event link to the live online webinar. [Register for Free](#)

Virtua in the News

- **Virtua Launches Hospital at Home** — This innovative program—the first in our region—allows certain patients to heal from the comfort of their home rather than a hospital room. Benefits include shorter hospital stays, higher patient and family satisfaction, and decreased likelihood of hospital readmission. It will also help decrease hospital volume during the COVID-19 surge. Read this [Philadelphia Business Journal](#) story and watch on [News 12 TV](#).
- **At-home COVID-19 Tests: Do They Offer a Passport to Normalcy?** — Many people are optimistic that rapid tests will enable them to return to socializing, travel, and other activities. But experts warn that tests could also give false confidence, potentially leading people to unwittingly transmit the virus. This [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) story includes remarks from Dr. Ryan McCormick, a Virtua primary care doctor.

You're Invited! Join our 2,000 Colleagues on Facebook

Thank you to all the colleagues who recently joined the [Virtua Colleague Group on Facebook](#)—pushing us to more than 2,000 members. Thank you also to the following people who said, "Hello Good," and invited their fellow colleagues to join in the community: Lisa Canduci, Amy Cramutola, David Loeb, Jessica Major, Catherine Marston, Amy McLeer, Jillian Miller, Purvi Patel, Elizabeth Pollard, Priti Schwika, and Joann Winter.

If you haven't already, we encourage you to join the [Colleague Group on Facebook](#), and spread the word. **Note:** Joining the group does not give other group-members heightened access to your profile, photos, and information on your personal Facebook page.

Reminder: Share the Good, Get a Free Hello Good Tote Bag

If you have a feel-good picture or story to post, add it on your own social accounts or the [Virtua Colleague Group on Facebook](#), tagging @virtuahealth and using hashtag #hellogood. You can also email hellogood@virtua.org. We will send you a free Hello Good tote bag while supplies last!

Five Stars for Virtua Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation – Cherry Hill

According to a trends report put together by the online reputation management company *ReviewTrackers*, people rely on local business listings to research and validate their decision-making as consumers. While we appreciate all reviews, descriptive reviews provide valuable insights to

prospective patients. Today, we share a kind and inclusive review by **Taylor B.**, a patient of Virtua Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation – Cherry Hill at Haddonfield Road.

I knew this was the right place as soon as Heather answered the phone and made me feel welcome. Heather ALWAYS had a smile on her face when I walked through the door or called in a panic. I went here after a hip surgery, and everyone has cheered me on throughout my recovery—from my very first steps to walking without crutches.

This place felt like family. Joan, Jinita, and the rest are an incredible team of people who really want to see you thrive. I looked forward to coming to physical therapy because heroes work here.

When patients share a note of thanks or a rating of their care online, it strengthens our business listings and Virtua's overall online reputation. Make it easier for your patients and their families to give the gift of gratitude by sharing materials from The Lasting Impact Project. Postcards, posters, and more can be found on the Virtua [Brand Hub](#).