



Clinician Update

July 24, 2025



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Cardiac Milestone at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes

Virtua recently performed its 1,000th implant of the WATCHMAN™ left atrial appendage closure (LAAC) device. The WATCHMAN™ device is designed to reduce stroke risk and serve as an alternative to the lifelong use of blood thinners for people with atrial fibrillation not caused by a heart valve problem (also known as non-valvular AF or NVAf).

“This milestone represents an amazing accomplishment for our entire team and could not have been accomplished without their tremendous support,” said electrophysiologist Darius Sholevar, MD, lead clinician of Virtua’s Heart Rhythm Specialists.

Lannae Ewing, vice president of cardiac operations, added, “Reaching the 1,000th Watchman case is an extraordinary achievement and a true testament to the strength of our cardiovascular program.”

[Click here to see photos on LinkedIn.](#)

More Media Attention for Virtua/ChristianaCare Announcement

Major news outlets continue to cover “Excellence Multiplied”—the potential co-founding of a new regional health system announced last week by Virtua and ChristianaCare. Here are some of the latest stories: [Modern Healthcare](#), [HealthLeaders](#), [Healthcare Dive](#), [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#), and [NJ.com](#). For

more information, please see [last week's edition of *Clinician Update*](#) and this [Virtua press release](#).

New 'Neuro ICU' Will Help People with Brain-Related Conditions

Virtua will open its first Neuroscience Intensive Care Unit next Tuesday, July 29, at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. The specialized Neuro ICU is equipped with the latest medical advancements and technology to care for critically ill patients with a wide range of neurological and neurosurgical conditions.

Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes is Virtua's hub for advanced care, including neurosurgical services provided by the [Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Neurosciences Program](#). The Neuro ICU underscores Virtua's commitment to enhancing tertiary services and providing advanced, life-saving care to the people of southern New Jersey.

For more details, see [last week's issue of *Clinician Update*](#). See today's broadcast on [CBS 3](#). Watch on [6 ABC](#) and read the [Philadelphia Business Journal](#) story and [Virtua's press release](#).

Transform Trial Compares Strategies of Care for Cardiovascular Event Reduction

Virtua Research periodically shares trials for your consideration. The Transform trial is a prospective, controlled, randomized, open blinded endpoint, event-driven pragmatic trial in patients who are at increased risk for atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (CVD) but with no known symptomatic cardiovascular disease. A brief synopsis of the eligibility criteria is listed below. Physician colleagues are vital to the success of the research program, even when they are not participating as investigators. Mark Finch, MD, Medical Director, Advanced Cardiac Imaging, is the principal investigator for this trial.

The current primary CVD prevention strategy relies upon risk stratification using population health markers such as age, sex, diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and tobacco use, with preventive therapy intensified in higher-risk strata. Since these risk factors are indirect surrogate markers of the underlying disease, atherosclerosis, this strategy leads to the treatment of individuals with risk factors who do not have atherosclerosis and failure to treat those with significant atherosclerosis who lack risk factors.

The trial tests the hypothesis that a Cleerly Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) Staging System-based care strategy reduces CV events compared with risk factor-based care. The Cleerly CAD Staging System uses coronary computed tomography angiography (CCTA)-based visualization and quantitative analysis to categorize individuals' atherosclerosis severity. This trial is designed to address the unmet need for more accurate risk stratification of asymptomatic individuals at increased risk for CV events and to personalize their treatment based on CV risk estimates using CAD visualization and quantification. CCTA is a noninvasive imaging modality that enables the visualization and quantitative analysis and staging of the extent and severity of coronary atherosclerosis.

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

Inclusion—Men > 55, women > 65 years of age, Pre-diabetes, type 2 diabetes, or metabolic syndrome and have no symptoms of heart disease.

Exclusion—History of symptomatic CVD defined as prior MI, exertional or unstable angina, ischemic stroke, claudication, arterial revascularization for atherosclerosis, or other CVD being actively managed by a cardiologist, e.g. heart failure

The remaining inclusion/exclusion criteria are extensive and can be shared by reaching out to our research team.

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

Note: You May Soon Receive Important Continuing Education Survey

If you have recently completed courses and regularly scheduled series (RSS) activities, you may soon be hearing from members of the Continuing Education Department for your feedback to evaluate outcomes related to team performance, communication, and patient care. An email with a link to the survey will be sent to learners.

An element of writing self-study requires Rowan-Virtua SOM and Virtua Health to demonstrate proof that there have been improvements in the performance of health care teams as a result of its overall IPE program. To help capture this proof, we are conducting a brief survey and would ask for you to participate.

Your feedback is essential. By sharing your experience, you'll help us understand what's working well and where additional support or resources may be needed. This survey focuses on how the education you received has influenced your practice, including communication with colleagues, understanding of roles across the care team, and improvements in patient care.

It takes just a few minutes to complete, and your responses will guide future CME planning and help us meet Joint Accreditation standards for educational effectiveness.

Joint Accreditation is a designation of interprofessional continuing education (IPE) for multiple health professions through a single application, fee structure and set of standards. This process is specifically designed to support education "by the team, for the team," promoting collaborative practice among health care professionals.

Thank you for your participation and for being part of our shared mission to improve care through education.

We Communicate Thoughtfully

This week, as we continue focusing on the Guiding Principle *WE Communicate Thoughtfully*, our teams across Virtua are watching tips about prioritizing and demonstrating kindness. [Click to view the tip of the week by track.](#)

What Patients Are Saying About Our Clinicians

Positive feedback continues to come in from our patients. Note the following recent examples and how the patient felt about the experience, and the clinician referenced:

"You're an incredible doctor. Your thorough diagnosis and explanation of the medical condition with action plan for treatment is truly amazing. Two doses of meds and I'm feeling like I am totally recovered. I am blessed to have you as my doctor. You're truly an angel." (**Suzanne Shenk, DO** – Internal Medicine)

"Dr. Hogrogian is a wonderful provider. He helped me at a time when I was truly in need of it. He got my medications to a place where I feel like myself again. I have much less depression and depressive episodes, and I would say that my anxiety is now moderate instead of severe. Thank you, Dr. H." (**Andrew R. Hogrogian, MD** – Psychiatry)

“She always is compassionate, helpful and takes her time during our appointments to make sure we cover everything. I feel truly listened to and cared for by her.” (**Dolores Peterson, MD** – Family Medicine)

“I was very pleased with how she wanted to know if I had any question at all. She would pause and listen to any and all of my concerns. I was very pleased with my visit.” (**Jane L. Fowler, PA**– Hand Surgery)

“Dr. Abadi is the consummate professional and his many years of experience with Virtua make it comforting to know he'll always be there.” (**Ali Abadi, DPM** – Foot and Ankle Surgery, Podiatry)

“My experience with Dr. Lawrence has always been an excellent one. He is a thorough, thoughtful and compassionate cardiologist. I highly recommend him.” (**David Lawrence, MD** – Cardiology)

“The office staff are very friendly and knowledgeable. Dr. Urkowitz is very friendly, professional as well as informative. He discusses a health care plan that works for you. You are a person instead of just a patient. He truly cares!” (**Alan Urkowitz, DO** – Family Medicine)

Opportunity for Your Patients Looking to Quit Smoking

Smoking Cessation Education and Support

Sept. 24, 5 to 7 p.m. at 200 Bowman Drive, Suite E132 Voorhees, NJ, 08043

Smoking cessation programs have been proven to help people "kick" the habit. Topics will include the addiction process, stress management, and developing a personal plan to quit smoking using the resources and support available. This is a free program run by a trained tobacco specialist. Registration is required. Click to [register](#) or call 888-847-8823.

Virtua also offers individual smoking cessation counseling which may be covered by insurance. For more information, call 856-355-7176.

Providing Care for Our Care Providers

For 16 years, Claire Smitley, manager of absence management, has guided colleagues through life's pivotal moments—from maternity leave to unexpected illnesses. Claire shares with Virtua President & CEO Dennis Pullin her immense reward in being a listening ear, helping people understand their pay and benefits

during time off. Beyond Virtua, Claire co-launched "Young Lives," a mentoring program providing support and practical resources to teen parents. Whether at work, volunteering, or even on DIY projects, Claire is committed to caring for those around her.

Click [here](#) to view this episode of *Here for Good Inside Edition*.



Virtua Health

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