

Clinician Update

September 4, 2025



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AMA Honors Virtua for Commitment to Doctors' Well-Being

This week, Virtua earned a prestigious national award for addressing physician burnout. We are one of only three New Jersey health systems—and about 100 nationwide—to be named a 2025 Joy in Medicine[®] organization by the American Medical Association (AMA).

“As a health system dedicated to creating outstanding experiences for everybody, always, it is especially gratifying to be recognized for caring for our frontline physician workforce,” said Jennifer Khelil, DO, executive vice president and chief clinical officer. “Our 3,000 clinicians routinely go above and beyond for our patients, and it is only fitting that we do all we can to ensure their well-being.”

Joy in Medicine recognizes health systems, hospitals, and medical groups that use proven methods to reduce burnout and enhance doctors' professional fulfillment in providing patient care.

A few examples at Virtua include:

- Regularly scheduled surveys to measure burnout rates and gather feedback, including the current Colleague Culture Survey
- WE Thrive programs to enhance wellness and provide mental-health support
- A Clinician Wellness Committee that develops strategies to enhance clinicians' experience and address sources of burnout.

According to the AMA, organizations that meet the rigorous criteria of the [Joy in Medicine Health System Recognition Program](#) are leaders in the national effort to transform health care work systems and address the root causes of burnout among care teams.

Next week, Sam Weiner, MD, CMO of VMG and VP of Virtua Health, and Chris Pomrink, DO, VP of Medical Affairs, will accept the Joy in Medicine award on behalf of Virtua as part of the American Conference on Physician Health in Boston. The conference is sponsored by the American Medical Association, Mayo Clinic, and Stanford Medicine, and is dedicated to advancing professional satisfaction and reducing burnout.

COVID-19 Cases Rising: Important Steps for Colleagues

COVID-19 cases are increasing across the country and at Virtua. We are seeing infections among patients and colleagues at higher rates than we have experienced for many months. Considering this, Virtua reminds colleagues of the key steps they must take if they have COVID or COVID-like symptoms:

1. Colleagues with symptoms that may be attributed to COVID-like illness, including any of the following symptoms, are encouraged to test for COVID-19 using a rapid antigen test (i.e., a home test) prior to reporting to work:
 - a. Fever > 100°F and/or chills without another known cause (i.e., urinary tract infection)
 - b. New onset cough
 - c. New onset sore throat
 - d. New onset sinus symptoms
2. If testing for COVID, colleagues should take two successive tests over two days. If the first test returns negative, call out sick and follow the [Infectious Disease of an Employee Policy](#) to return to work.
3. If either the first or second rapid test is positive, colleagues must call out sick and report their positive result using the online assessment tool available on the Colleague Corner. All positive tests must be reported via the online [COVID-19 Test Reporting Tool](#). The tool is also available in the [For Employees page](#) of [Virtua.org](#).
4. If you test positive for COVID-19, you may not work for five days from the onset of your symptoms. The day your symptoms start is Day 0. You may return to work on Day 6 if symptoms have improved and you have no fever, but you must be masked at work for the next five days.

Q&A: COVID Vaccine Recommendations

Mary Campagnolo, MD, of Virtua Primary Care – Mansfield, recently spoke with NJ.com reporter Jackie Roman regarding COVID vaccinations. The article will run before the end of this week. Here is a Q&A from their conversation:

Are COVID vaccines still recommended for adults and children?

Yes, family physicians still recommend COVID vaccines for children as young as 6 months old, as well as for adults. It's also recommended for pregnant people, which can provide protection to the infant before they are old enough to be vaccinated. Although vaccination rates have declined, medical professionals continue to stress the importance of staying up-to-date with vaccines to prevent serious illness and hospitalization, especially as new variants emerge.

What COVID-19 vaccines are available?

As of now, both Moderna and Pfizer have vaccines available for different age groups. Moderna is approved for everyone over 5 months old, while Pfizer is approved for those over 5 years old. It's best to talk to your child's pediatrician to determine which vaccine is the right choice for them.

Is there any change to insurance coverage for COVID vaccines?

For now, many manufacturers and insurance companies have stated that they do not plan to change their coverage. However, it's still an evolving situation, so it's a good idea to check with your insurance provider. You can also ask your doctor's office, as they may have information on whether the vaccines will be stocked and how they will be covered.

How can people navigate the confusing information about COVID vaccines?

It's understandable that individuals feel overwhelmed by conflicting information. The best advice is to rely on trusted medical professionals and organizations. You can consult your family physician or pediatrician and look to guidance from professional groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians. These organizations advocate for vaccination as an essential public health measure. Relying on these sources can help you make informed decisions about your family's health.

Where can I get a COVID vaccine?

If you are a Virtua patient, the vaccines are available at Virtua Primary Care locations. They are also available at CVS locations in New Jersey. Please call to check on availability.

Colleague Flu Vaccination Program Begins Sept. 9

Virtua has released the [flu vaccination schedule](#) for colleagues. Flu shots are mandatory for Virtua colleagues in accordance with the Mandatory Flu Vaccine Policy. Click to [view the policy](#). Virtua will begin offering free flu shots on **Sept. 9**. All colleagues should receive their flu shots by 11:59 p.m. on **Nov. 4**.

Note: Additionally, while Virtua is not offering COVID vaccinations to all colleagues at this time, we encourage colleagues to get their COVID shot/booster. Please consult the Q&A above for additional information.

Keeping Aware of West Nile Virus

Last week, New Jersey recorded its [first two confirmed](#) 2025 cases of West Nile virus. One of those cases was [an Atlantic County child](#). Four other suspected West Nile virus cases in the state are also under investigation.

The cases come as mosquito surveillance shows high levels of the virus circulating throughout the state. West Nile has been detected in 776 mosquito pools across all New Jersey counties—higher than this same time last year, which saw 41 human cases and eight deaths.

“While 80% of infections are subclinical or asymptomatic, about 20% develop mild illness with fever, headaches, body aches, joint pain, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash,” said Martin Topiel, MD, Virtua’s chief infection control officer. “One percent of infected patients develop neuroinvasive disease like meningitis, encephalitis, or acute flaccid myelitis. Risk of neuroinvasive disease is higher among older individuals and those with immunocompromising conditions. While we can stress prevention, we’ll also want to be aware that West Nile may be affecting our presenting patients, particularly this time of year through mid-September.”

Virtua First in State to Perform Single-Port TAMIS

Virtua is the first in the state to perform transanal minimally invasive surgery (TAMIS) using single-port robotic technology to remove rectal polyps, early-stage rectal cancer, and benign growths. Keith P. Meslin, MD, FACS, FASCRS,

section chief of colorectal surgery, is currently the only surgeon performing this procedure and is doing so at Virtua Voorhees Hospital.

“TAMIS helps the surgeon perform through a single small opening directly into the anus and is used to remove benign lesions or early cancers from within the rectum itself to avoid a major resection. It provides greater precision and better visibility, especially for hard-to-reach areas inside the rectum and lower colon,” said Dr. Meslin. “Flexible instruments can reach higher areas than before, making it possible to treat more complex cases that may have required larger, more invasive surgeries in the past.”

The procedure also helps reduce trauma to the anal area, typically resulting in less discomfort and a lower risk of complications, like bleeding or injury to nearby tissue. As with other robotic surgeries, additional benefits include better outcomes, less pain, and quicker recovery. The patient goes home the same day.

This new procedure reflects Virtua’s commitment to advanced technology, exceptional surgical skill, and unwavering commitment to improving patient outcomes. The advancement is also concurrent with national recognition for Virtua’s dedication to evidence-based care. The Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Cancer Program earned accreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer (NAPRC), a quality program of the American College of Surgeons. Additionally, [US News & World Report recently recognized](#) Virtua as among the best hospitals for colon cancer surgery.

Virtua Transitions From Preliminary to Final Reads for Radiology Services at Several Locations

Virtua radiology departments at Virtua Voorhees, Virtua Marlton, and Virtua Mount Holly Hospitals, as well as the satellite emergency departments at Camden and Berlin, have transitioned to all VRad preliminary read services to final reads effective Tuesday, Sept. 2.

All final reports are now to be found in Epic as per usual standards.

Care teams and providers will no longer receive discrepancies, as all reports will now be final. In particular, ED providers and care teams will no longer see discrepancies in their ED basket pools as all reports will now be final.

“We understand you may have concerns about how this change will affect your patients. We are grateful for your trust and collaboration in caring for our community,” said Gregory J. Goodworth, MD, Virtua’s chief of radiology. “We are confident that through careful planning, we can ensure that patients continue to receive the care they need with minimal disruption.”

For any questions regarding the transition process, please contact:

- Kim Seal at 610-761-7798 or kseal@virtua.org
- Colleen Conner at 610-416-7058 or cconner@virtua.org
- Virtua help desk at 856-355-1234 (When opening a ticket please tag it with VRad)

Personalized Medicine for Barrett’s Esophagus Now Standard at Virtua

Virtua has fully implemented TissueCypher testing for every patient diagnosed with Barrett’s esophagus as the new standard of care. TissueCypher is a precision medicine test that helps predict an individual’s risk for progressing from Barrett’s esophagus to esophageal cancer. Tissue samples are collected during an endoscopy and sent to a specialized lab. The results help Virtua gastroenterologists determine a more accurate and individualized care plan.

“Virtua is leading the way as the first health system in the region to fully adopt TissueCypher throughout the system, said gastroenterologist Zubair Malik, MD, director of the Virtua Motility & GERD program. “Patients with Barrett’s esophagus will automatically receive this test as part of their regular endoscopy, which will aid in appropriately staging their condition and developing a personalized course of treatment. It’s another advancement in Virtua’s comprehensive GI & Digestive Health program.”

What PCPs Should Know About Aortic Disease

Annual Cardiology for Primary Care Symposium to Address This and More, Oct. 4

Thoracic aortic aneurysms (TAAs) are often clinically silent but carry significant morbidity and mortality when complications arise. By increasing awareness and recognition at the primary care level, earlier diagnosis and improved outcomes are possible.

“It’s important to reinforce the role of primary care in early detection, longitudinal surveillance, and multidisciplinary coordination for improved outcomes,” said Virtua cardiothoracic surgeon Eden C. Payabyab, MD, who will address strategies in dealing with TAAs, including dissection and rupture, at the **15th Annual Cardiology for Primary Care Symposium to take place virtually on Saturday, Oct. 4, from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

The presentation will highlight high-risk patient populations, including those with genetic syndromes, bicuspid aortic valve, and a family history of aortic disease. Attendees will gain practical guidance on when to suspect a thoracic aneurysm, how to select appropriate imaging modalities, and when to refer patients for surgical evaluation. Emphasis will also be placed on medical management strategies that can slow aneurysm progression, including blood pressure control and lifestyle counseling.

The symposium is part of the “Key Essentials for Optimizing Patient Care” five-block CME series presented by the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Payabyab’s presentation will be just one of an array of topics and speakers providing valuable cardiology and primary care insight.

The registration fee for the individual Cardiology for Primary Care program is \$149. (VMG clinicians: this event—and the series—is reimbursable through your annual CME allotment.) These events are free to residents, fellows, and medical students. [Go here to register for this event.](#)

Note: The full five-block series includes (in addition to cardiology) content featuring psychiatry, geriatrics, pediatrics, and women’s health. Registration for the full series is \$695. [Go here to review the full brochure and for more details.](#) For questions about the series, email cme@rowan.edu.

New Password Security Features Launching at Virtua

As part of the ongoing commitment to security, Virtua’s Information Technology Department is introducing two new features to help protect your account credentials.

- Passwords will now be continuously scanned using **real-time threat intelligence from CrowdStrike**. If your current password or passphrase appears in a compromised database, you’ll receive an email from falcon@crowdstrike.com and will be required to change your password at your next login.

- During the password change process, **Microsoft Password Protection will automatically evaluate your new password** to ensure it is strong and not previously compromised.

Innovation Project Earns Prestigious Funding

Virtua has received a grant from AARP and the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses for a project designed to improve ICU patients' well-being and strengthen the nursing workforce.

The award “allows us to focus on reducing or even avoiding sedation, getting patients up and moving, and fully engaging families,” said Steve Bocchese, PhD, RN, Virtua’s director of clinical practice and education.

The initiative, which is launching at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, also aims to support a healthy work environment. Read in [*Becker’s Hospital Review*](#).

Practicing Excellence

This week, we continue to focus on our third Guiding Principle, **WE Invite Belonging**. [Click to view the tip 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:

“She is an intelligent and caring individual. So happy I found her! I really needed someone I could trust with my GI needs. (**Alison Miller, APN** – Gastroenterology)

“Dr. Powell is great! I travel all the way back from Florida to see her. She always remembers me and all my ailments. Makes me feel like she really cares, which is why I chose her to be my doctor. 5 stars!” (**Melanie Powell, DO** – Family Medicine)

“Fantastic physician! He has a conversation and talks WITH you, not to you. I would absolutely recommend him to my family & friends.” (**Jonathan Low, DO** – Family Medicine)

“Thank You, Dr. F, for being kind, understanding, patient, and caring. You are the best.” (**Robin Figliola, DO** – Family Medicine)

“Such a kindhearted doctor, and his staff as well.” (**Michael Ngu, MD** – Endocrinology)

“I was treated by the best staff ever.” (**Juanita Huggins, DO** – Obstetrics and Gynecology)

“She’s very understanding, listens, and explains everything so you understand. She really cares about her patients.” (**Wendy Cook, DO** – Pediatrics)

“He listens attentively to what I have to say, and he has always conducted a thorough physical examination at every appointment. His treatment plan has always been well thought out and effective. His office staff have always provided me with friendly and thorough service. In short, Dr. Ukrainski has been key to the successful treatment of my complex cardiac issues.” (**Gerald Ukrainski, MD** – Cardiology)

“Dr. Callahan is an excellent physician who is phenomenally skilled, knowledgeable, and caring.” (**Morgan Callahan, DO** – Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery)

“I absolutely love Dr. Bajaj. She treats you like a friend.”(**Jasmine Bajaj, MD** – Family Medicine)

Always Best Foot Forward for Dr. Collins

Podiatrist Gerald Collins, DPM, has been a cornerstone of Virtua for 16 years, helping grow his practice from a single specialist to a team of 13. While his surgical work in foot and ankle reconstruction is his main passion, his greatest satisfaction comes from seeing his patients thrive during their post-operative visits. Outside the hospital, Dr. Collins balances a busy family life, coaching his kids' sports teams and playing guitar and singing in a 20-year-old Irish band. Hear in this *Here for Good: Inside Edition* interview with President and CEO Dennis Pullin how whether in the operating room or on stage, Dr. Collins' commitment to his craft—and his community—shines through.

[Click to view the episode.](#)

Meet Family Medicine Physician Steven F. Santangelo, DO

Stephen Santangelo, DO, AVP of clinical operations and a family medicine physician, believes that family is at the heart of his approach to medicine.

Inspired by his sister, a registered nurse, and his interest in science, Dr. Santangelo was drawn to a career in health care. In addition to family medicine, Dr. Santangelo spends his free time outdoors kayaking, hiking, and birdwatching. Because of the nature of his practice, Dr. Santangelo considers it a privilege to care for families throughout their health care journey and building relationships with his patients.

To learn more about his philosophy of care, [watch this video](#).

Welcome to Virtua!

Hello to the following clinicians who onboarded with Virtua Medical Group this week:

Daniel Baik, MD (Gastroenterology)
Brandon Boyer, DO (Cardiology)
Devamohan Sivalingam, MD (Hospitalists)
Tulsi Patel, MSN, FNP-BC (Clinical Decision Unit)
Amanpreet Kaur, FNP (Hospitalists)
Alicia Roesler, MS, PA-C (Clinical Decision Unit)
Thomas Tessitore, MD (Primary Care)
Evan Florin, DO (Hospitalists)
Louise Ngo, MD (Anesthesia)
Perfecto Gallido III, DO (Anesthesia)
Lori Owusu-Dapaah, MD (Anesthesia)
Neil Nadpara, MD (Gastroenterology)
Param Patel, MD (Gastroenterology)
Brandon K. Chu, MD (Gastroenterology)
Keneil K Shah, MD (Cardiology)
Shikha Talwar, MD (Gastroenterology)
Janet Lee, MD (Behavioral Health)
Amelle Williams, MD (OB/GYN)
Eleanor Williams, DO (OB/GYN)
Stephen Crawford, DO (Cardiology)
Goonja Patel, MD (Endocrinology)
Sean M. Welch, MD (Rheumatology)
Bryan J. Berlin, PA-C (Reconstructive Orthopedics)
Chelsea Crosby, FNP (Reconstructive Orthopedics)
Richa Thakkar, DO (Neurosciences)
Lauren Nicole Trachtenberg, MD (Primary Care)

Great to have you on board!

Upcoming Calendar

Through Sept. 18, Colleague Appreciation Gatherings

This year's Colleague Culture Survey theme is *Lock in Excellence: Your Engagement is Key*. As a token of our respect and appreciation, Virtua is honored to host *Colleague Appreciation Gatherings* at selected locations throughout September. This is a wonderful opportunity for colleagues to come together, connect, and enjoy a complimentary meal.

Click [here](#) to view the schedule of the gatherings. For colleagues based in locations not listed, you are invited to attend the gathering at the nearest campus.

Sept. 13, Virtua at the Walk to End Alzheimer's

When: Sept. 13, Registration at 8:30 a.m., ceremony at 10 a.m., walk at 10:30 a.m.

Where: Cooper River Park, Pennsauken

Registration is free, and no donation is required (though always appreciated).

Register today by clicking [here](#).

Sept. 20, Annual Haddon Avenue Street Festival

Virtua is once again proud to support the Haddon Avenue Street Festival, which will take place on Saturday, Sept. 20. Presented by Parkside Business & Community in Partnership (PBCIP), the free annual event celebrates the intersection of family, community, entrepreneurship, and the arts. The street festival lines Haddon Avenue just a few blocks north of Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital between Kaighn Avenue and Mechanic Street. Virtua's Community Health Engagement, Heart Failure, Eat Well, and Dental Center teams will be on hand at the event. To learn more, click [here](#).

Virtua Sites Nominated for 'Best of the Press'

The voting is now open for these three Virtua entities in the running for *The Press of Atlantic City's* 2025 Best of the Press list:

- Virtua Primary Care – Linwood (nominated in four categories)
- Virtua Voorhees Hospital (best hospital category)

- Virtua Recon Ortho at Virtua Medical Group (best neuropathy, spine, and joint rehabilitation clinic)

Voting closes Sept. 24. Link to Ballot: [Ballot-2025 |.pressofatlanticcity.com](https://ballot-2025.pressofatlanticcity.com)



Virtua Health

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