

Clinician Update

August 10, 2023

Virtua Health and Other Philadelphia-Area Health Organizations Form Regional Coalition to Eliminate Race-Based Medicine

Today, Independence Blue Cross announced the formation of the Regional Coalition to Eliminate Race-Based Medicine, of which Virtua Health is a founding member. Other participants include Virtua's partners Penn Medicine and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

"All people deserve equal access to high-quality, safe health care," said President and CEO Dennis Pullin in the media announcement. "The coalition brings together the region's leading health care organizations to address longstanding racial inequities in how medical decisions are made. Together, we will transform these processes at our own institutions and also advocate for them across our industry. At Virtua Health, we are proud and honored to be part of this groundbreaking effort, which will improve health outcomes for so many."

Stand by for more details on how this coalition will conduct its work and how Virtua will be involved. To learn more about the Regional Coalition, click [here](#).

Practicing Excellence at Virtua – Sharing Clinician Feedback on *Listening Well*

Thank you for your commitment to Practicing Excellence and the Patient Experience journey. This week, we invite you to focus on the invaluable insights provided in the [Week 19 and 20 guides](#).

Topics include *Supporting your Team*, *Conveying Compassion*, *Explaining Care*, *Explaining Actions*, and *Listening Well*.

Regarding the skill of listening, Virtua Urgent Care physician Elyse Morel, MD, had this feedback regarding Listening Tip#2: The 2-Minute Rule:

"When speaking to patients, I am often tempted to interrupt and dive into asking questions. Not too long ago, I anticipated a complicated visit because the patient had several concerning symptoms, and they did not initially appear to be connected. However, she shared that these same symptoms appeared in previous episodes of her chronic condition, and she mentioned the name of the medication that typically helps alleviate her symptoms. By allowing the patient to speak without interruption, she could provide the full story and her visit was more efficient."

It is no surprise that our patients frequently cite listening in reviewing our clinicians. [Last week, we shared](#) positive patient feedback regarding the listening skills of Virtua clinicians. Below are still more reviews. (Note the comment, and the clinician referenced):

- “He's a great advocate for his patients. We found him to be a good listener to my problems and concerns... I am happy he is on my side.” (Vivek Sailam, MD)
- “He truly takes the time to listen to his patients and puts their mind at ease as far as any questions or concerns they may have.” (Sean McMillan, DO)
- “I felt like Dr. Gross really cared about my concerns and listened carefully.” (Shannon Gross, DO)
- “The doctor takes time and listens to you, explains everything, too, so that you understand.” (Jaclyn Morales, MD)
- “She is a good listener and open to my questions and concerns.” (Kimberly Ni, MD)
- “One of the best PCPs I've ever had. He really takes his time to listen and understand your medical concerns/issues and needs.” (Ryan Schroeder, MD)
- “He was professional, kind, and explained everything and listened to whatever concerns I might have had.” (Gregory Mukalian, DO)
- “He was very attentive, listened carefully, and explained each step that would be taken moving forward.” (William Holaday, MD)
- “Really listened to me and my concerns. She was also extremely observant. I could see that she was subtly taking in my whole person and not just what I was saying... 5 stars is not enough!” (Jean Marie Davidson, DO)

Practicing Excellence allows you to search its library by topic. As we continue with our 26-week Patient Experience journey, you are also welcome to search for a topic that interests you— like listening— and find all related and relevant tips. We welcome your feedback as we share the Practicing Excellence journey. Email your thoughts to VirtuaClinician@virtua.org.

Dr. Tolulope Agunbiade: Heart-Healer and Gaming Mom

Meet Tolulope Agunbiade, MD, a heart expert with a big heart herself. She's all about helping patients at Virtua with a compassionate touch. But there's more to her than the white coat. Dr. Agunbiade is a gaming mom, and connects with her kids through their love of video games.

Click to [view the video](#) and see her in action.

Social Share Moment: Give a shout out to Dr. Agunbiade’s inspiring work by reposting her profile video on your social media. Use hashtags **#BestDoctors** and **#BestPeople** to showcase Virtua's dedication to making a positive impact.

[Maternal-Fetal Medicine Today Now Posted to Digital 411](#)

Our most recent issue of the *Today* series of physician education newsletters centers on maternal-fetal medicine (MFM). [Maternal-Fetal Medicine Today](#) spotlights Virtua’s Maternal Risk Program, which is unique to South Jersey. Clinicians in the program handle concerns among high-risk pregnancies, such as cardiac conditions, gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia, substance abuse, and placenta accreta.

“With physicians on our team who each have special interest, training, and experience in these conditions, we can get patients evaluated and under management in a knowledgeable way quickly—or with prompt recommendations routed back to their referring obstetrician—using the most current approaches to safeguarding mother and child who may be at risk,” said Virtua maternal-fetal medicine specialist Shailen Shah, MD, lead physician for the Virtua MFM program.

Virtua is also taking steps to erase disparities in maternal care, particularly in Camden. “We’ve undertaken a rigorous internal analysis to detect any gaps or shortcomings in Virtua’s obstetrical care that may correlate with the race of patients,” said obstetrician Theresa Adeliyi, MD, director of Virtua’s Center for Women.

[Click here to view Maternal-Fetal Medicine Today](#). 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.

[Virtua in the News](#)

COVID Comeback: Hospitalizations Increase in New Jersey

CBS 3 interviewed Virtua pulmonologist Eric Szejman, MD, VP of clinical operations, about the recent uptick in COVID cases across the state. Dr. Szejman cited summer travel and waning immunity from earlier vaccines as possible causes for the rise. “The virus continues to mutate, and we're seeing different strains,” he noted. “Most of us haven't received our vaccines for quite some time, so some of the immunity we received from the vaccine may have fallen off.” Additionally, Virtua patient Joy Ezekiel-Gibson spoke of her experience with long COVID—which affects about 25% of COVID patients, research shows. Watch and read [here](#).

Virtua CEO, Rowan President Speak at Regional Business Event

The heads of Virtua and Rowan University gave a joint address this week to the South Jersey Chamber of Commerce, where they discussed their organizations’ innovative partnership. Virtua President and CEO Dennis Pullin and Rowan President Dr. Ali A. Houshmand presented “Reimagining the Future of

Medicine: Rowan University and Virtua Health.” The breakfast meeting was part of the Chamber’s “Good Morning South Jersey” series.

Launched last year, the Rowan-Virtua partnership includes the new Virtua Health College of Medicine & Life Sciences, a groundbreaking collaboration between higher education and health care that will further distinguish South Jersey as a regional hub for innovation, research, and clinical discovery. View the event description [here](#). To learn more about the partnership, read [here](#).

Virtua to Receive \$1 Million to Expand Youth Mental-Health Program

U.S. Senator Bob Menendez and Congressman Andy Kim announced Virtua will receive \$1 million in federal funding to create a new Children Achieve Success through Therapeutic Life Experiences (CASTLE) facility for children’s behavioral health services at Virtua Willingboro Hospital. [CASTLE](#) provides high-quality diagnosis and treatment for youth with behavioral and mental health issues. This will be Virtua’s third CASTLE program, joining existing centers on Virtua’s Camden and Berlin campuses.

Virtua President and CEO Dennis Pullin and CASTLE program director Amy Quick participated in a press conference announcing the funding, which is part of the latest federal spending bill. The new facility will open next year.

Cort Adelman, VP of government relations, said. “At a time when we see rising youth mental health challenges across our community, Virtua was proud to work with Senator Menendez and Congressman Kim to successfully advocate for federal funding to expand our CASTLE program and fulfill our promise to be Here for Good.”

Read in [NJBiz](#) and on [Senator Menendez’s website](#), watch on [6ABC](#) and [Fox29](#), and listen on [KYW Newsradio](#).

Virtua Clinicians Praise Soccer Star’s Pregnancy Exercises

U.S. World Cup soccer player Julie Ertz credits pelvic-floor exercises with helping her get in top condition less than a year after giving birth. Two Virtua experts spoke with *CBS 3* about how expecting and new moms can also use such techniques to have a smoother birth and recovery. Strengthening the pelvic floor helps women rebuild its normal structure and function, said obstetrician Michelle Salvatore, MD, of Virtua Mount Holly Hospital. Virtua ICU nurse Gwen Meise, who is also a fitness instructor, demonstrated a pelvic-floor exercise and spoke of staying in shape before and after having twins at age 37. Watch [here](#).

From the Hello Good Mailbox

We extend our gratitude to Brenda O’Brien, practice manager of Virtua Medical Group’s hospitalist group, for sharing the following note from Danielle Stoeber, assistant nurse manager of the PCU, addressed to George Kargul, MD, hospitalist at Virtua Voorhees. In her note, Danielle wrote:

“Over the last two weeks, we’ve had two complex and challenging cases where you were the attending physician. In both instances, you took the time to tirelessly explain, educate, and help the families in making the difficult decision to transition the patients to hospice/comfort care. In these emotional and trying times, I wanted to acknowledge your efforts in supporting the families and my team during both transitions. The families expressed their gratitude and appreciation for your assistance. From a nursing perspective, we deeply appreciated the time you spent with these families. Thank you for your collaboration and for working alongside us to ensure the families were as comfortable as possible.”

Dr. Kargul’s efforts have made a significant impact on the patients’ families and fellow team members. Thank you, Dr. Kargul, for your invaluable contributions and your commitment to patient care.

Upcoming CME Events

Cardiology for Primary Care - September 9, 2023

[Register today for the annual Virtua Cardiology for Primary Care Symposium](#), scheduled to take place on Saturday, Sept. 9. This will be the 13th year Virtua Cardiology has held this event to educate primary care practitioners, physicians, NPs, PAs, and other health professionals on news and trends in cardiovascular care. A few of this year’s topics include sleep and the heart, imaging modalities, a panel discussion on heart failure, and so much more. Check out the many excellent presentations on the agenda. [Learn more and register here](#). The program will be presented in-person on the campus of Rowan College of Burlington County, with a live-stream version available.

The symposium is part of the Rowan series, “Key Essentials for Optimizing Patient Care,” a 5Block CME Series, and is designed specifically to better prepare primary care clinicians for the management of their patients. Questions? Email VirtuaClinician@virtua.org.

Quarterly Cardiology Grand Rounds, September 20

Topic: CCTA in 2023 – Plaque, Physiology and Planning PCI

Join us on Wednesday, Sept. 20, from 7 to 8:00 a.m. for the next session in our Quarterly Cardiology Grand Rounds series. We will be discussing Coronary Computed Tomography Angiography (CCTA), specifically “CCTA in 2023 – Plaque, Physiology, and Planning PCI.” The featured speaker will be Jonathon A. Leipsic, MD, FRCPC FSCCT. Dr. Leipsic is head of the Department of Radiology and a professor of cardiology at the University of British Columbia. He is also a research chair in advanced cardiopulmonary imaging and has over 530 peer reviewed manuscripts in press or in print, over 300 scientific abstracts, and has edited two textbooks. [Click here to learn more about this session](#).

To register for the session, click [here](#).

The Non-Hepatologist’s Guide to Caring for Patients with Liver Disease Saturday, September 30

There are many kinds of liver diseases and conditions, and caring for patients can be very complex. An upcoming education session for all clinicians is being made available to you by Virtua Advanced Transplant & Organ Health. Experts will be speaking on a variety of topics, including cirrhosis, hepatitis, acute liver failure, and beyond.

“At Virtua, we provide comprehensive care for all types of liver disease,” said Chief of Hepatology Simona Rossi, MD. “This education session is designed to empower you to confidently evaluate and care for patients with this multifaceted disease. And that includes from the most common to the most complex.”

This education session is for all clinicians and will take place on Saturday, Sept. 30, from 8 to 11 a.m. at the Virtua Barry D. Brown Health Education Center, 106 Carnie Blvd in Voorhees.

Joining Dr. Rossi as presenting clinicians will be Hisham El Genaidi, MD; Nyan Latt, MD; and Ashraf Malek, MD. For the agenda, click [here](#).

Stand by for registration details. For more information you can reach out to Natalie Frament, transplant services liaison, at nframent@virtua.org.

Colleague Gatherings in September

Virtua Health is delighted to host colleague gatherings at selected locations throughout September for colleagues to come together, interact, and enjoy a meal. We encourage you to share this wonderful news with your team members.

Note: For colleagues based in locations not listed below, you are invited to attend the gathering at the nearest campus.

Virtua Marlton Hospital - Wednesday, Sept. 6

11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital - Thursday, Sept. 7

11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Virtua Voorhees Hospital - Thursday, Sept. 7

11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Virtua Willingboro Hospital - Thursday, Sept. 7

11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Berlin - Thursday, Sept. 7

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 4 to 5 p.m., and 9 to 10 p.m.

Virtua Mount Holly Hospital - Thursday, Sept. 14

11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m.

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Camden - Thursday, Sept. 21

11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

303/301 Lippincott Drive, Marlton - Thursday, Sept. 21

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Good First Impressions Make All the Difference

Euricka Francis, phlebotomist at Virtua Marlton Hospital, joined President and CEO Dennis Pullin in the [latest episode](#) of the *Here for Good: Inside Edition* podcast. During her short but impactful five months here at Virtua, Euricka has garnered praise and appreciation from colleagues and patients alike. She said that her new colleagues have warmly welcomed her to the team, and she extends the same warmth to her patients. Patient satisfaction surveys and five-star ratings consistently spotlight Euricka's exceptional care and dedication. One patient, Lisa, raved, "Euricka is so nice and funny. She made my experience very easy and relaxing."

Fellow colleagues have high praise for Euricka, emphasizing that she is making a significant impact on people's lives by creating personal connections with them. Her positivity and warmth demonstrate how good first impressions make all the difference.

To learn more about Euricka's story, you can watch the complete episode [here](#).

IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

On Aug. 7, we marked National Purple Heart Day, a time to pay tribute to our brave Armed Forces members who have endured injuries or made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in combat. The Purple Heart award, one of the oldest military honors, holds a special place in honoring their valor. With 1.8 million Purple Heart recipients to date, some of these individuals continue to live, work, and contribute to our local communities today.

Learn more about the origins and ways to observe National Purple Heart Day here: [Purple Heart Day 2023](#).

Upcoming Events

WE SERVE: Importance of African Americans in Combat

Virtual Session, Aug. 15, 12 to 1 p.m.

Learn more about Virtua's own active/military members leading the WE Serve Colleague Community. Presented by the Black and African American Colleague Community (BAACC), this session will offer education, data, and stories related to the importance of African Americans in combat. The discussion

will be facilitated by the chair and co-chair of the WE Serve Colleague Community, New Jersey Army National Guard veteran Jeanette Conrad-McKee, a nursing director at Virtua Mount Holly, and Navy veteran Katelynn Hewitt, pet therapy and visiting vets coordinator.

Click to register: [WE Serve: Importance of African Americans in Combat](#)