

Clinician Update

August 22, 2024

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Virtua Chief Clinical Officer Reg Blaber, MD, Offers Insights on Empathy and Experience

A new [study](#) finds that some [patients feel health care providers will judge them](#) for expressing mistaken or inaccurate beliefs—creating a communication gap that can lead to ineffective treatments and missed opportunities. The researchers suggest doctors need to overcome their tendency to judge patients and encourage them to share their thoughts.

“A meaningful health care encounter hinges upon open communication and trust between the provider and patient,” said Reg Blaber, MD, executive vice president and chief clinical officer at Virtua. “It is critical that patients have a safe space to ask questions, share their concerns, and receive personalized feedback free from judgment.”

To assist clinicians, Dr. Blaber stressed the importance of our shared Practicing Excellence journey. “We are in year two of a systemwide program that addresses patient experience, relationship-building, self-awareness, and far more. Every colleague, regardless of role, participates in an ongoing skill-development series designed to enhance human understanding, communication, respect, and empathy.”

In a statewide business publication, Dr. Blaber is one of two New Jersey leaders to reflect upon the study’s findings and offer recommendations for improving patient-provider relationships. Read in [NJBIZ](#).

Advancing the Patient Experience

We're in Week 20 of the 26-week Advanced Patient Experience Program. Discover valuable insights and discussion starters in the [Week 20 Guide](#).

This week, the organization shines a spotlight *Track 1: Hospital Medicine*. Colleagues enrolled in this track are watching the tip “[The Weight of Decision Fatigue](#).” This tip defines decision fatigue and its impact on our mental well-being, energy, and endurance.

What Patients Are Saying About Our Clinicians

Confidence in care is a common reference among our clinician reviews. Note the following recent examples and how the patient felt about the experience, and the clinician referenced:

“She and her staff made my visit a very positive experience. She is caring and listened to my concerns.”
(Natalie R. Parkes, MD)

“He was a pleasant surprise. He went over my chart with me in great detail and explained quite a few things that I hadn't understood. He took his time with me and I left feeling a lot better. Thank you!”
(Ryan J. Townsend, MD)

“She is just a super doctor, and her staff is wonderful. I would not go anyplace else.” (Suzanne H. Shenk, DO)

“I can't speak highly enough of her. She is compassionate, attentive, and an expert in her field. She takes her time reviewing, educating, and advising on concerns and results. Her genuine care and professionalism made me feel welcomed and comfortable throughout. I highly recommend her!”
(Heather Guiliano, APN)

“He is a true professional. Kind, attentive, and a good listener. I would recommend him to anyone.”
(Todd Schachter, DO)

From the Hello Good Mailbox

Behind every dedicated doctor is a patient.

Michelle Salvatore, MD, shared, “I am a busy OB/GYN laborist physician and medical director. Today, I did some self-care and primary care catch-up at Virtua Health Primary Care – Maple Shade. This is a great office with excellent staff and providers.”

Spyral Affirm Trial

Virtua Research periodically shares trials for your consideration. A brief synopsis with the eligibility criteria for the SPYRAL AFFIRM Global Clinical Study of Renal Denervation with the Symplicity Spyral Renal Denervation System in Subjects with Uncontrolled Hypertension (SPYRAL AFFIRM) trial is listed below. If you have a patient who meets the criteria, please contact the Virtua Research team at research@virtua.org, and a research coordinator will review their eligibility with you. If your patient is enrolled, we will keep you updated on their progress. Physician colleagues are vital to the success of the research program, even when they are not participating as an investigator. Kintur Sanghvi, MD, is the principal investigator for this trial.

The SPYRAL AFFIRM study will evaluate the long-term safety, efficacy, and durability of the Symplicity Spyral system in a population of approximately 1,300 renal denervation-treated subjects with up to 36 months of follow-up. The Symplicity Spyral Renal Denervation system is comprised of a single-use, disposable catheter (Symplicity Spyral catheter) and a reusable Symplicity G3 or the next-generation radiofrequency (RF) generator. The intended use is to deliver low-level RF energy through the wall of the renal artery to denervate the human kidney. The Symplicity Spyral catheter and Symplicity G3

generator received CE mark in October 2023, followed by FDA approval in November 2023. They are commercially available in selected geographies.

The Symplicity Spyral Renal Denervation system is indicated to reduce blood pressure as an adjunctive treatment in patients with hypertension in whom lifestyle modifications and antihypertensive medications do not adequately control blood pressure. The population eligible for inclusion into this study includes subjects with uncontrolled hypertension. The individual is diagnosed with hypertension and has an average baseline office systolic blood pressure ≥ 140 mmHg. Exclusion criteria are individuals with renal artery anatomy that are ineligible for treatment, including at least one main renal artery with a diameter of less than 3 mm or greater than 8 mm. The remaining inclusion/exclusion criteria are extensive and can be shared by reaching out to our research team.

Now in Effect: New Visiting Hours at Virtua Hospitals

As reported here last week, new visiting hours for Virtua hospitals are now in effect. This change is intended to provide a safe and restful environment for all.

Visiting hours are now 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily at all five Virtua hospitals.

Please note these additional visiting guidelines:

- All visitors must be at least 12 years old. Anyone under 16 years old must always be accompanied by an adult.
- All visitors are required to obtain a visitor pass upon arrival.
- Only two visitors should be at the patient's bedside at a time. Additional visitors are asked to wait in a lounge or common area.

As before, each patient may identify one or two people to participate in their care, called Care Partners. One Care Partner may stay with the patient beyond general visiting hours, as needed. Overnight accommodation can be granted on a case-by-case basis.

As always, specific departments within the hospital—such as the emergency department, pediatrics, and maternity—have their own distinct set of visitor guidelines, which are posted on the Virtua website.

Safety Update: Staff Safety Technology to Begin Rollout

Virtua is committed to fostering safe environments for everyone, including our workforce. In response to colleague feedback, Virtua will soon launch a new staff safety technology called Commure Strongline Pro at select hospital departments/units. Virtua Mount Holly Hospital's emergency department, pediatric emergency department, and behavioral health unit will be the first to onboard Commure Strongline Pro, beginning in late September.

Commure Strongline Pro will provide colleagues in select roles with special badges that can be worn alongside the Virtua-issued ID badge. Should the wearer feel unsafe for any reason, they can double-

press the badge to send an alert to in-house security staff and other colleagues in the vicinity. The alert will inform authorized staff who is in duress and their exact real-time location.

The goal is to prevent and de-escalate incidents of (verbal or physical) threats or harm by providing colleagues with an instantaneous and discreet way of requesting assistance. To better understand the technology, its uses, and the rollout plan, please [consult these FAQs](#).

Look for more information about initiatives to support staff safety in next week's communications.

More of Virtua in the News

CDC Reports that COVID is Now Endemic; What Does That Mean for South Jersey?

An official from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently said the agency considers COVID-19 endemic. Not all health care providers agree, however, especially since some people are at a higher risk for health complications. Virtua pulmonologist Heather Giannini, MD, spoke on the topic to [NBC Philadelphia](#).

Forbes Names Virtua a Best-in-State Employer for 6th Year

Virtua has again earned national recognition as one of the best places to work. *Forbes* magazine named Virtua among America's Best-In-State Employers for 2024. This prestigious award is presented by *Forbes* and Statista Inc. Learn more in this issue of [Forbes](#).

Meeting the Need for Our Diverse, Multilingual Community

At Virtua, we see language as a bridge rather than a barrier. We are steadfast in our commitment to ensuring every patient feels heard, respected, and cared for—no matter what language they speak.

Maria Aviles, community outreach supervisor, is essential to driving this mission forward.

In this episode of "*Here for Good: Inside Edition*," Virtua President and CEO Dennis Pullin chats with Maria about Virtua's services for the underinsured, her inspiring upbringing, and the importance of building trust with our diverse, multilingual neighbors.

Click to [view the video](#) or listen on your favorite podcast platform.

Doubling the Good for Our Community

In our latest Wow-WE video, discover how Virtua's second Mobile Pediatrics Unit is expanding our reach to 70% of the community, providing approximately 10,000 annual visits to children.

Also featured is the five-year anniversary of our joining with Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Willingboro Hospital, and numerous medical practices. Additionally, check out the hundreds of Virtua colleagues who participated in Run With the Docs, the Haddon Township Pride Parade, Phillies Pride Night, and Well-Being Week activities.

Click to view the latest [Wow-WE video](#).

Upcoming Events

14th Annual Cardiology for Primary Care Symposium, Sept. 7

Join us for this year's Cardiology for Primary Care, the first in the Key Essentials for Optimizing Patient Care five-block CME series presented by the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine and offering up to 5 AOA CATEGORY 1-A / 5 AMA PRA Category 1 credits™.

The event will take place virtually on **Saturday, September 7, 2024, 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

This year's agenda includes the following topics and speakers:

- **Prescribe With Precision: Better Cardiovascular Outcomes Using the Updated BEERS Criteria** - Kevin Overbeck, DO
- **Lipids: An Overview and Update on Diagnosis and Management** - Tania Maheshwari, DO
- **Aortic Stenosis** - Teresa Sousa, MSN, FNP-BC
- **Diagnosis and Management of Hypertension** - Christopher Mercogliano, DO
- **Innovations & Guidelines on Hypertension** - Kintur Sanghvi, MD
- **EKG Lecture for Primary Care** - Ramneet Wadehra, DO
- **Immunotherapy Adverse Events & Management** - Shayma Kazmi, MD
- **PE Management and PERT Team in 2024** - Luai Tabaza, MD
- **Current State of Coronary Artery Calcium Scoring (CACS) and Coronary Computed Tomography Angiography (CCTA)** - Michael Gannon, MD

The registration fee for the individual Cardiology for Primary Care program is \$149. To register for this event, or for the full series, visit: go.rowan.edu/cme. Go [here to review the full brochure and for more details](#).

For questions about the series, email at cme@rowan.edu.

Webinar Quarterly Cardiology Grand Rounds: Advancing Patient Care Using Cardiac Magnetic Resonance, Sept. 18

Join us for the next Quarterly Cardiology Grand Rounds, to be held virtually on **Wednesday, Sept. 18, 7 a.m. to 8 a.m.** Michael P. Gannon, MD, Virtua Cardiology, fellowship-trained in advanced cardiac imaging, will discuss advancing patient care using cardiac magnetic resonance (CMR).

The program objectives are to:

1. Assess the clinical strengths and weaknesses of CMR as a tool in multi-modality imaging
2. Understand the clinical indication and prognostic value of CMR in patients with heart failure and coronary artery disease
3. Become familiar with the use of CMR in diagnosing patients with myocardial infarction with non-obstructive coronary artery disease (MINOCA)
4. Provide resources for future patient and provider use for CMR

The target audience is physicians and interprofessional teams. To register for this online event, click [here](#). For continuing medical education accreditation information, and to learn more about the event, click to [view the flyer](#). For more information, please contact VirtuaClinician@Virtua.org.

Helping Those Who Smoke to Kick the Habit, Sept. 23

We often come upon patients who are having a hard time quitting smoking. “Face it, it’s hard to quit. It’s even harder to do it alone,” said Virtua thoracic surgeon Matthew M. Puc, MD, medical director of the Penn Medicine | Virtua Cancer Program. “It’s one thing to encourage our patients. It’s even better when we can offer the assistance needed to finally break the deadly habit.”

Virtua offers two smoking cessation options—both run by certified tobacco treatment specialists:

- Small-group education and support sessions are FREE. Patients can register on virtua.org or call 888-847-8823. The next one-night class is **Sept. 23**. For more information, click [here](#).
- Individual counseling consists of eight visits and is covered by most insurance plans with no out-of-pocket costs. Sessions are held at the Virtua Thoracic Surgery office in Marlton. To schedule, patients can call 856-355-7176.

Please feel free to share these worthwhile resources. [Click here to learn more](#).

Interprofessional Critical Care Symposium, Oct. 18

The Virtua Center for Nursing Excellence and Innovation, in collaboration with Virtua critical care leadership, will be hosting its [first critical care symposium](#). This interprofessional accredited event will include presentations on advanced heart failure, cardiovascular surgery, organ transplantation, complex technology in the ICU setting, and much more. The target audience is physicians, physician assistants, advanced practice nurses, medical fellows, nurses, pharmacists, and medical residents.

Participants will be able to:

- Discuss strategies for improving patient outcomes including respiratory management of ARDS, hemodynamic management, and pharmacological interventions

- Foster collaboration of the interprofessional team to promote best practices in the care of complex patients
- Explore technological advances in critical care and their practical applications

Presenters will include Gary Weissman, MD, MSHP; Emillio Mazza, MD, PhD; Tolulope Agunbiade, MD; Dan Choi, MD; Michael Lee, MD; Janine Vallen, MSN, RN, CCTN, APN-C; Ann Thompson, DO; Mikel Shea Ehntholt, MD; Joanne Phillips, DNP, RN, CPPS, NEA-BC, FCNS; Kavitha Dalal, PharmD; and Donna Wixted, MS, RD.

The event will take place Friday, October 18, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Barry Brown Health and Education Center (the HEC) in Voorhees. For more details, including CME accreditation, registration information, the agenda, and more, click [here](#).

Colleague Appreciation Gatherings in September

This year's [Colleague Culture Pulse Survey](#) theme is *WE Respect Everybody, Always*. 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. Please find the schedule below and be sure to save the dates in your calendars. For colleagues based in locations not listed below, you are invited to attend the gathering at the nearest campus.

Virtua Mount Holly Hospital

Wednesday, Sept. 4

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Virtua Voorhees Hospital

Thursday, Sept. 5

11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Virtua Willingboro Hospital

Thursday, Sept. 5

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital

Tuesday, Sept. 10

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Virtua Marlton Hospital

Wednesday, Sept. 11

11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Camden

Thursday, Sept. 12

6 a.m. to 7 a.m.

11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Virtua Corporate Offices

Thursday, September 12

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

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Berlin

Wednesday, Sept. 18

11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

7 p.m. boxed meals for 2nd and 3rd shifts

Rowan-Virtua SOM Drive for Scholarship, Sept. 29

This year's Rowan-Virtua SOM Drive for Scholarship is on **Sunday, Sept. 29**, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. This annual tournament-style fundraising event is held at TopGolf in Mount Laurel. Proceeds from Rowan-Virtua SOM's Drive for Scholarship support student scholarships at Rowan-Virtua SOM. For more information, [click here](#).

IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

[Women's Equality Day](#) is recognized on **Aug. 26**, commemorating the 1920 certification of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote. While this amendment was a significant step toward equality, it's important to acknowledge that voting rights for Black women weren't fully realized until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Subsequent legislation further extended voting rights to those of other communities. The movement that began on Aug. 26 played a crucial role in advancing the cause of women's equality.

For local events commemorating Women's Equality Day, click [Women's Equality Day 2024 – Alice Paul Institute](#).