

Clinician Update

August 29, 2024

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New Jersey Data Shows Marked Rise in Patients with Obesity

A [report](#) by the New Jersey Hospital Association (NJHA) raises concerns about the far-reaching health impacts of obesity as the proportion of New Jersey patients with underlying obesity more than doubled from pre-pandemic levels.

The level of childhood obesity is particularly concerning, as it may lead to potentially chronic, even life-long, health problems.

“As obesity is often associated with other negative health outcomes, both physical and psychological, this report emphasizes the importance of our role to address this need,” said bariatric surgeon Samuel Wasser, MD. “At Virtua, we are raising awareness that obesity is a chronic disease and offer tools to help with weight loss and overall improved health.”

Dr. Wasser welcomes all clinicians to learn about [Virtua’s Complete Weight Management Program](#), which includes FDA-approved weight loss medications and bariatric surgery options. These tools, when combined with psychological counseling, nutritional and fitness counseling, support groups, and guidance from a team of weight management navigators, help ensure patients achieve their goals.

NJHA’s report also discusses the importance of access to healthy foods and nutrition programs to combat obesity and its long-term impact on the health of the population. “We address this social determinant of health daily, so the finding is not a surprise to us,” said April Schetler, AVP of community health engagement at Virtua. “It’s at the core of our mission as we face the issues of food insecurity in our communities.”

In 2023 alone, the Mobile Grocery Store provided shoppers with a dignified experience at more than 400 market stops, supporting people with the food they need to be healthy 43,585 times.

The full report can be found at www.njha.com/CHART. Read news coverage [here](#).

Note below for information about Virtua Eat Well’s upcoming food drive.

Advancing the Patient Experience

We’re on Week 21 of our Practicing Excellence journey. Today’s tip can be found in the [Week 21 Guide](#).

This week, the organization shines a spotlight on *Track 5: Acute Care Staff*. They are watching the tip, [“Being There When Times Are Hard.”](#) This tip discusses how to be present and supportive when things are hard for fellow colleagues.

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:

“Love Dr Andi! She has a great personality, and we never feel rushed or unimportant. Staff are friendly and helpful!” (Andrea L. Iannuzzelli, DO)

“Dr. Mir and her staff are a 10 out of 10! You don’t feel like a number. Everyone is very friendly. She’s great at going over your history and her recommendations are spot on. I feel very comfortable with her. She’s great!” (Raema Mir, MD)

“I was so impressed with her. She listened to my health concerns. She made me feel like family and not just another patient. You can tell she cares about her patients and her profession is more than just a job, more than just a paycheck. You can tell she really cares.” (Amanda Francoeur, PA)

“Every appointment with him is wonderful. He is a great listener, asks pertinent questions, teaches and explains, is patient, and works with the patient to provide the best possible care. He is thorough and kind.” (Christopher Morrison, MD)

“An absolute class act. He should be on those billboards outside of the hospital if he isn’t already. Very patient, very comforting. Just an all-around great physician. If you’re his patient, consider yourself very lucky.” (Howard Soh, MD)

Virtua in the News

Virtua Helping to Address Physician Shortage

Virtua and other New Jersey entities are working to bolster the medical workforce. Through the partnership with Rowan University, Virtua will help train more aspiring doctors, among other initiatives. Read in [NJBIZ](#).

Whooping Cough Cases Rising in N.J. and Beyond

Cases of whooping cough have increased dramatically over the past year, and Virtua experts are raising alerts to help the public stay safe. Al Sacchetti, MD, a long-time emergency medicine physician at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes, shared information about the illness. And Juliette Osborne, mother of a young Virtua patient, discussed her family’s recent experience with pertussis. Watch on [6ABC](#).

Virtua Physician Volunteers to Treat ‘Tranq’ Wounds

Dangerous, hard-to-treat wounds caused by the street drug “tranq” are on the rise in the region. Tranq, an animal tranquilizer called xylazine, is mixed with illegal opioids. Jamaal Shaban, DO, a Virtua surgeon, belongs to a volunteer group that’s working to address the crisis. He treats people with tranq wounds and teaches other volunteers how to provide this care. Read in [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#).

Virtua Expert Identifies Best Shoes for Painful Heel Condition

A national magazine tapped a Virtua podiatrist for insights on the best footwear for people with plantar fasciitis. Gigea Bhular, DPM, a foot and ankle doctor, discussed the pros and cons of five different products, from loafers to hiking boots to insoles. Read in [Self](#).

Virtua Recognized for Operational Excellence

A national organization that focuses on performance improvement in health care recently presented its “Operational Excellence” award to Virtua. HealthTrust Performance Group recognized Virtua with one of six Member Recognition Awards during its conference in Orlando last month. Improvements increased efficiency, resiliency, and streamlined workflows, the story noted. Read in the [Associated Press](#).

Dennis Pullin Recognized for Academic Medical Center Leadership

An industry publication has named President and CEO Dennis Pullin among “96 Academic Medical Center CEOs to Know.” “The CEOs highlighted on this list are trailblazers in the health care field,” wrote *Becker’s Hospital Review*. “Their leadership of top-tier AMCs drives groundbreaking research, innovative clinical trials, and enhanced patient experiences.” Dennis was recognized for numerous accomplishments, from expanding and enhancing regional care and innovative programs to establishing Virtua’s academic medical partnership with Rowan University. Read the announcement from [Becker’s Hospital Review](#).

Virtua’s HR Chief Spotlit among Local Health Care Leaders

South Jersey Biz has recognized 15 leaders in its “Who’s Who in Health Care 2024” feature, including Rhonda Jordan, EVP and chief human resources officer.

A strategic and operational leader with more than 30 years of experience, Rhonda sets Virtua’s vision for how the organization’s workforce achieves Virtua’s mission of “Be Well, Get Well, and Stay Well.” She is responsible for the development and implementation of Virtua’s people strategy, talent management and acquisition, organizational culture, change and development, and compensation and benefits. Read on [SouthJersey.com](#).

Burlington County Awards Grant to Virtua Food Program

A Virtua program that provides patients with free food, nutrition counseling, and other support services has received a \$75,000 grant from Burlington County. The funding will help stock the shelves of Virtua’s “Eat Well” Food Farmacy inside Virtua Mount Holly Hospital. The grant is part of the county’s new \$1 million funding initiative to assist food programs. Listen on [KYW Newsradio](#) and read on [WHYY](#) and [Tap Into](#).

Vote for Virtua in the NJBIZ 2024 Reader Rankings

Statewide business magazine *NJBIZ* has released the finalists for its annual Reader Rankings. Virtua is a nominee in five categories within the health care division. They are:

- Family Medicine Practice(s): Virtua Medical Group
- Health Care System: Virtua Health
- Home Care Agency: Virtua Home Health Services
- Hospital(s): Virtua Health
- Physician Group: Virtua Medical Group

Individuals can vote once a day in each category through September 29. Please note: You will need to supply an email address to vote. Learn more and cast your votes here: [Reader Rankings 2024 - NJBIZ](#)

Support Groups for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias

In what can be a resource for families of patients you may know, the Rowan-Virtua New Jersey Institute for Successful Aging, an affiliate of Virtua Medical Group, hosts monthly support groups for caregivers of individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. There is one virtual group offered on the first Wednesday of each month (the next being **Sept. 4**) from 3 to 4:30 p.m., and one in-person support group offered on the third Monday of each month from 9:30 to 11 a.m. at the Rowan Medical Building in Stratford.

To learn more, click [here](#).

Click this [Zoom link](#) to join virtual support groups.

Feel free to share. For more information and updates, go to [New Jersey Institute for Successful Aging](#) at Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine.

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, Sept. 7, from 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, from 7 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 CME accreditation information, and to learn more about the event, click to [view the flyer](#). For more information, please contact VirtuaClinician@Virtua.org.

Hepatology and Gastroenterology Updates: Closing the Gaps, Oct. 5

In this session at the Virtua Barry D. Brown Health Education Center on Saturday, Oct. 5, participants will be able to:

- Diagnose, evaluate, and treat alcoholic hepatitis
- Recognize updates on new advanced and endoscopic techniques such as transgastric liver biopsy
- Understand non-surgical treatment options for liver tumors by interventional radiology
- Create a platform that allows the providers within the network to manage patients with hepatobiliary and GI diseases collaboratively as well as empower communication with advanced care

Speakers include Simona Rossi, MD; Charles Snyder, MD; Ashraf Malek, MD; Nyan Latt, MD; Joseph Broudy, MD; Ely Sebastian, MD; Raman Battish, MD; and Brian Colangelo, LCSW.

For more details, including CME accreditation, registration information, the agenda, and more, [click here](#).

Next Week: Support Virtua Eat Well's Fall Food Drive

Virtua celebrates the five-year anniversary of its Eat Well Food Farmacy program, an initiative that has been instrumental in addressing food insecurity across South Jersey. To mark this milestone, Virtua Eat Well is bringing back the Fall Food Drive, with the goal of collecting 5,000 pounds of food—1,000 pounds for each year of the Food Farmacy program's existence.

The food drive, which will take place from **Sept. 3 to 27**, presents an opportunity for Virtua's 14,000 colleagues to come together and make a significant impact on the lives of families facing food insecurity. By prioritizing food access as an important part of staying healthy, Virtua continues to demonstrate its commitment to fostering wellness beyond medical care.

To facilitate widespread participation, we encourage colleagues to purchase food via this [Amazon link](#). Additionally, donation bins will be conveniently located at Virtua's corporate offices at 303 Lippincott Drive, Marlton, on the first floor. This community-wide effort not only celebrates the success of the Eat Well program, but also reinforces Virtua's commitment to addressing the factors that affect our community's health and build stronger, healthier communities in South Jersey.

Encourage Teams to Use Colleague Refuel Rooms

Refuel Rooms are available at select Virtua locations for colleagues to decompress and recharge. The Refuel Rooms offer dimmable lights, reclining lounge chairs, meditation seats, and yoga mats. They are stocked with items that support the relaxation experience (a beverage station, sound machine, adult coloring books, activity books, fidget poppers, eye masks, and more).

Refuel Rooms are located at:

- **Virtua Voorhees Hospital**, Lobby B, ground floor
- **Virtua Marlton Hospital**, 3rd floor across from the elevator
- **Virtua Mount Holly Hospital**, 1st floor near the Art Gallery
- **Virtua Willingboro Hospital**, 1st floor next to the conference room
- **Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital**, 4th floor at the end of the left hallway

Guides Needed for Musicians On Call

Would you, or someone you know, want to be a part of the healing power of music?

Each Wednesday evening, Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital hosts bedside performances by [Musicians on Call \(MOC\)](#), a nonprofit organization that has performed to more than 10,000 patients, staff, and visitors at the hospital in over a dozen years of performances. While MOC has successfully lined up performers to provide the music, the program can use a fresh supply of volunteer guides.

“With in-person performances returning for the first time since the pandemic, more guides are needed to help ensure the MOC's success.” said Tiffany Lockett, director of Volunteer Services and Spiritual Care at Virtua. “They accompany the musicians to patient rooms so to help the process move most effectively, and with great reward for all.”

Volunteers escort the musicians, communicate with staff and patients, and heighten the MOC experience. They know the protocols, policies, and expectations, and are responsible for making sure these guidelines are upheld during the shift. Guides generally commit to volunteering once a month for at least one year. The in-person programs are usually held once a week in the early evening for approximately 1.5 hours.

To learn more on how to apply, visit <https://www.musiciansoncall.org/most-important-gig/>

Know a medical student, resident or fellow who may wish to serve as a guide? Email VirtuaClinician@virtua.org.

While the in-person program is held at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes, know that every week there is an [ongoing virtual program](#) — with offerings in Spanish — that benefits all of Virtua. Use hospital code **lourdes** to access.

IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

Wrapping up this month is the commemoration of the [Great March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom](#). This historical event took place on Aug. 28, 1963, bringing over a quarter million people to the march. Civil rights leaders A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin coordinated plans for the March and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his “I Have a Dream” speech.

Also, on Monday, we celebrate Labor Day. This holiday was created through the labor movement, fighting for rights such as fair wages and recognizing the contributions of workers in the country. Click to learn more about the [history of Labor Day](#).