

Clinician Update
December 16, 2021

Virtua and Medtronic Share Plans to Reimagine Traditional Health Care Models

Virtua and Medtronic plc this week announced a five-year partnership focused on improving the delivery of quality care for residents of South Jersey, particularly those who reside in underserved communities or face systemic barriers to care.

Medtronic LABS, an independent, impact-focused organization funded by Medtronic plc, will simultaneously launch a separate pilot collaboration with the Cherry Hill Free Clinic and Virtua to address care and food access for people with chronic conditions—the first U.S.-based initiative for Medtronic LABS.

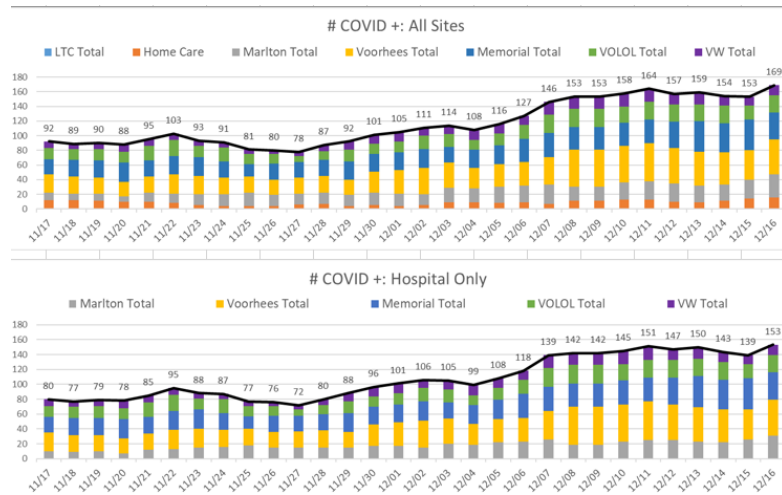
“This partnership presents a significant opportunity to accelerate health equity and better outcomes for individuals and families in our community,” said Dennis W. Pullin, FACHE, president and CEO of Virtua. “Together, we will apply the latest research and innovation to the fundamentals of community-based care, allowing us to identify and empower those who need support to achieve the best-possible quality of life.”

The initial scope of the partnership includes developing community-based heart-health programs, enhancing continuity of care at the Cherry Hill Free Clinic, and identifying and supporting those at risk for food insecurity through the Virtua Eat Well Food Farmacies.

Much like Virtua’s future affiliation with Rowan University, this innovative alliance positions Virtua for future success and further cements its position as a forward-looking, ever-evolving health system that is unquestionably Here for Good.

Read more about what Virtua and Medtronic intend to accomplish [here](#).

COVID-19 Census



Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey is 1.26, slightly down from last week but still continuing a trend upward.
- The total number of cases as of today are as follows:
 - Burlington County: 51,763 cases
 - Camden County: 64,814 cases
 - Gloucester County: 36,380 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, and Gloucester counties: 3,007.
- The state's Vaccination Overview dashboard reports 14,559,157 doses of vaccine have been administered.

Boosters Recommended for All Eligible Virtua Colleagues

Look for an email message from Virtua leadership strongly encouraging all Virtua colleagues to get a booster vaccine as soon as they are eligible. Data from South Africa (an early omicron hotspot) suggests the vaccines (before the booster) decrease the risk of hospitalization and death by 70 percent, and yet is only 30 percent effective in preventing a symptomatic omicron infection. Fortunately, multiple studies have shown that vaccine boosters provide a significant increase in antibody levels and can help keep people safe.

With this knowledge, **Virtua highly encourages all colleagues to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine booster if/when they are eligible.** CDC guidelines state that eligibility occurs six months after completion of a two-dose mRNA vaccination (Pfizer or Moderna) or two months after the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The new Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega-Site in Mount Laurel is open Tuesdays through Saturdays and appointments are easy to secure at www.virtua.org/vaccine. For your safety and especially for those you love, we urge you to receive the booster ahead of the Christmas and New Year holidays.

NJ Reports Hospitalizations Up 150% Over the Last Month

COVID-19 continues to worsen in New Jersey, with the state today announcing 16 new confirmed deaths and more than 7,600 positive tests. Statewide coronavirus hospitalizations have now increased 150% over the last month.

The increases in cases and hospitalizations come as the omicron variant of the virus is spreading throughout the globe, on top of the delta variant that has made up the majority of New Jersey's cases in recent months.

It also comes after last month's Thanksgiving gatherings. New Jersey schools are experiencing a spike in COVID-19 cases—the highest level since the beginning of the school year, after many residents gathered for the holiday.

State officials say the majority of new cases are among unvaccinated residents, though cases among fully vaccinated people are increasing, which shows protection from the first round of shots may be waning. Officials are encouraging more people to get booster shots.

Encourage your patients and colleagues to get boosted. Click to [schedule an appointment](#) at the Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega-Site in Mount Laurel.

Free COVID-19 Tests Delivered to NJ Homes Under New Program

New Jerseyans can now have a COVID-19 test shipped for free to their home, [NJ.com](#) reports.

The state Health Department has partnered with test provider Vault Medical Services on a federally funded program, increasing testing “availability and accessibility” throughout New Jersey, state Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli said.

It comes as the Garden State continues to see upticks in COVID-19 numbers as the winter and holiday seasons arrive. Commissioner Persichilli says testing is “critical” to help track and prevent upticks.

She said this program is in addition to traditional COVID-19 testing at sites throughout the state and may be more convenient for people who have trouble leaving the house to get tested.

The saliva test can be completed in 10 to 15 minutes at home and sent off to the lab via the U.S. Postal Service. To request a test kit, visit [learn.vaulthealth.com/nj/](#).

New Report Shows COVID-19 Impact on NJ At-Home Death Rate

The New Jersey Hospital Association’s Center for Health Analytics, Research & Transformation issued a report today exploring at-home deaths during COVID-19’s peak last year. They found a significant rise in at-home deaths in 2020, combined with declines in hospital admissions for emergent conditions such as heart attack and stroke. This suggests that delays in seeking care during the COVID-19 outbreak may have contributed to New Jersey’s excess deaths.

The report found, “The true death toll from COVID-19 remains unknown. In New Jersey, deaths in 2020 exceeded prior years’ totals, even after accounting for those directly attributed to the coronavirus. There were approximately 95,715 deaths in the state in 2020, according to the New Jersey State Health Assessment Data system (NJSHAD). COVID-19 was the leading, or primary, cause of death for 16,458 individuals, leaving 79,257 additional deaths attributed to other reasons (including deaths from unknown causes).

“That total of 95,715 deaths far exceeds prior years’ numbers. From 2017 through 2019, total deaths in a single year did not exceed 76,000 in New Jersey. Therefore, even when separating out deaths due to COVID-19, the total number of non-COVID-19 deaths in New Jersey throughout 2020 was roughly 4.3% higher than in previous years. That leaves thousands of additional—or ‘excess’—deaths in New Jersey throughout 2020 compared with [prior years](#).” To read more, [click here](#).

Virtua Expands Thoracic Surgery Program

With the advanced technology of the da Vinci surgical system and the Monarch navigational bronchoscopy robot, our experienced thoracic and interventional pulmonology teams have the most advanced tools to detect lung cancer and provide immediate surgical intervention when needed. This means the best quality outcomes for our patients. Congratulations, Dr. Matthew Puc and the team at Virtua Marlton Hospital.

Virtua Physicians Share Their Insight on Today’s Health Care Challenges

Two Virtua physicians recently had the opportunity to share their knowledge and insights with statewide leaders on the topic of navigating through health disparities in the community.

- Dr. Jubril Oyeyemi, founder of the Cherry Hill Free Clinic, medical director of care management initiatives at the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, and an internal medicine physician at Virtua Health, was a keynote speaker at the ninth annual “Building a Culture of Health in New Jersey” conference in Atlantic City. The theme of this year’s conference was “Healing Communities and Connecting Voices.” The focus of the conference was on health equity and healing communities as a result of a pandemic that has deepened existing health disparities and inequities—especially among marginalized and underrepresented communities.
- Dr. Mary Campagnolo, Virtua family physician and geriatrician, medical director for value-based programs and payer contracts for Virtua Medical Group, and a member of the board of directors for American Academy of Family Physicians, was a panelist at the Winter Conference of the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute on the topic “Primary Care as a Common Good – The Prescription for a Healthier and More Equitable Health Care System.” The discussion was based on the NASEM (National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine) 2021 report “Implementing High Quality Primary Care,” and the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute report, “Emerging from COVID 19- Action Plan for a Healthier State,” which emphasizes importance of support for primary care.

Virtua and Rowan University Announce “Nurturing Nurses” Pilot Program

Virtua and Rowan University are proud to announce the “Nurturing Nurses” pilot program for new and existing Virtua nurses interested in earning a bachelor of sciences degree in nursing. Through a combination of reimbursement and scholarship opportunities, Virtua will assume the cost of tuition at Rowan University—making higher education more affordable and accessible.

Dr. Reg Blaber, executive vice president and chief clinical officer, shared this big news at last week’s graduation ceremony for Our Lady of Lourdes School of Nursing.

The buzzed-about moment was captured by three news stations and was featured in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. You can see it for yourself [here](#).

Those who participate in Nurturing Nursing will benefit from a streamlined, immersive educational opportunity at a significantly reduced cost. Virtua, in turn, benefits by attracting and keeping talented nurses in our health system and helping them broaden their knowledge and skills.

Nurturing Nurses will launch its first cohort in the spring of 2022. Those interested must be a Virtua RN in good standing. The program is exclusive to Rowan University and does not transfer to other colleges/universities.

Policy Alert–Virtua Research Investigators

If you are a potential or current investigator in a research study that is funded by the Public Health Service (PHS), you must comply with Virtua’s policy on this matter. [This notification letter](#) by Reginald Blaber, MD, executive vice president and chief clinical officer, alerts investigators to fully understand what is required of the [“Virtua Public Health Service \(PHS\) Research Financial Conflict of Interest Policy.”](#)

This policy was recently updated to ensure compliance with federal guidelines. Incidentally, the term investigator means any individual who is responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of PHS sponsored research, or proposals for such funding. If you have any questions, contact Director of Research Administration Jillian Stanley at jstanley@virtua.org.

Special Musicians on Call Holiday Concert Tomorrow

Musicians on Call is holding a special holiday concert for patients, families, and colleagues. The “Hope for the Holidays” virtual concert will premiere **tomorrow, Dec. 17 at 3 p.m.**, and will be available for post-event viewing for the rest of the month.

You can watch the countdown to the premiere 24 hours before the start time.

Link: https://connect.musiciansoncall.org/virtual_programs/holidays

Password: lourdes

You can find a [flyer](#) with your unique access information. Feel free to share with colleagues and especially patients and families. The Musicians on Call program is available to select hospitals across the U.S., and Virtua is honored to be a part. Virtua’s relationship with Musicians on Call started with in-person, bedside concerts by local talent at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital.

With the pandemic, the concerts have become virtual, with occasional special events featuring nationally known artists. The concert is an exclusive event for participating organizations and will feature performances by Reba, Kelly Clarkson, Gavin DeGraw, Leslie Odom Jr., Lauren Alaina, Maddie and Tae, and Cassadee Pope.

Send us your photos! We’d love to see your consented photos of patients or colleagues watching the concert. You can find Virtua’s consent form [here](#). You can also broadcast or share in a group setting. Capture the moment and send us pictures to VirtuaClinician@virtua.org.

Five Stars for Virtua Urgent Care – Medford

Online recommendations and ratings from our patients and their families mean a lot to us and we are always glad to earn their trust and confidence in addition to their endorsement.

Today, we share a five-star review from Katharina B., a mother whose daughter was a patient at Virtua Urgent Care – Medford. Katharina wrote:

I just took my 12-month-old daughter to Virtua Urgent Care – Medford because of a hand injury. This place was beyond amazing! The front desk person was so kind. Same goes for the nurse, nurse practitioner, as well as the X-ray tech, who was so patient with my little one even though it was so difficult to have her sit still for the X-ray. I’d give 100 stars if I could!

We’re thrilled when our care teams and locations are recognized online. Online reviews inspire our teams, provide insight, and influence loyalty. To encourage your patients and their loved ones to share their experiences online, consider giving them a Lasting Impact Project card. These cards can be found on the Virtua [Brand Hub](#).