

Clinician Update

Dec. 3, 2020

Questions about the Coronavirus Vaccine?

The federal government has been working since the pandemic started to make one or more COVID-19 vaccines available as soon as possible. There are at least 36 vaccines under investigation, and some of them have advanced far enough to be the focus of large-scale clinical trials

At present, the FDA is evaluating reports submitted by a few vaccine manufacturers, notably Pfizer and Moderna. Provided the data meets the rigorous safety and efficacy criteria, it is likely the FDA will grant emergency-use authorization for health systems – including Virtua – to begin vaccinating front-line health care workers before the end of the month.

We asked a trio of our in-house experts – Drs. Reg Blaber, Martin Topiel, and Alejandro Herrera – to discuss COVID-19 vaccines and the many questions associated with them. This is the first in an ongoing Q&A series.

How is Virtua preparing for the likely arrival of COVID-19 vaccines?

We have assembled five committees that meet every day. These committees will address everything from logistics to resources to education. Although we don't know every detail at this moment, we will work diligently and be prepared for the vaccines when they arrive.

Will it be mandatory for all colleagues to receive the vaccine?

No, the vaccine will not be mandatory. We recognize and respect that some of our colleagues will want more time to consider their options. The goal of this Q&A series is to provide colleagues with information so that they can feel informed about the decisions they make.

How many vaccines will Virtua receive?

We do not know the number of vaccines we will receive initially. It is unlikely that there will be enough vaccines for all colleagues in the first shipment, so one of the committees is working to ensure that individuals in units/departments that have a higher risk for exposure receive priority. If you are not among the first round of people to receive the vaccine, please know the second and subsequent shipments will quickly follow.

What is an mRNA vaccine?

If approved for emergency-use authorization, this type of vaccine will be among the first available to treat COVID-19. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are messenger RNA vaccines (mRNA). This is a comparatively new approach to making vaccines; the vaccine teaches our immune system to produce antibodies that would protect against future infection from COVID-19 without exposing us to the virus itself.

To be clear: The COVID-19 mRNA vaccines do not give someone COVID-19, they do not use the live virus, and they do not affect or alter our DNA in any way.

How effective are these vaccines?

They appear to be very effective based on the information that is publicly available. Pfizer's study enrolled more than 43,000 individuals and reported 95% efficacy. Similarly, Moderna reported 94.1% efficacy for its 30,000-patient study.

Importantly, they both appeared to prevent the forms of clinical illness of COVID-19 infection characterized as "serious" when compared to placebo. Also important, both companies reported that the efficacy of the vaccine was consistent across age, race and ethnicity, and gender demographics. Based on the data that we currently have, the Pfizer trial reported 10 cases of severe COVID-19 infection among the study participants. Nearly all of those cases – nine out of 10 – were among the study participants who received a placebo instead of the actual drug. The remaining case (1) occurred in a study participant who received the vaccine.

In the Moderna trial, 30 cases of severe COVID-19 disease developed and all of them were among the placebo group. Therefore, no cases of severe COVID-19 infection occurred among the group that received the vaccine.

How many injections of the vaccine will someone require?

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two injections. For Pfizer, the vaccines will be given 21 days apart. For Moderna, it is 28 days. Other vaccines in development may only require a single injection; time will tell.

What is the process to approve vaccines for distribution?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is reviewing all the available data on the vaccines. We anticipate the review will be complete on Thursday, Dec. 10 for the Pfizer vaccine and Tuesday, Dec. 17 for the Moderna vaccine.

Reportedly, the evaluation will be available for viewing livestream – allowing the public, and particularly infectious disease experts, to learn additional details about the studies. The vaccines will likely be made available to health systems – Virtua included – very shortly afterward on an emergency-use basis.

The federal government will oversee a centralized process for ordering, distributing, and tracking COVID-19 vaccines in the United States. This will involve the Centers for Disease Control as well as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Defense. Other countries are following their own processes

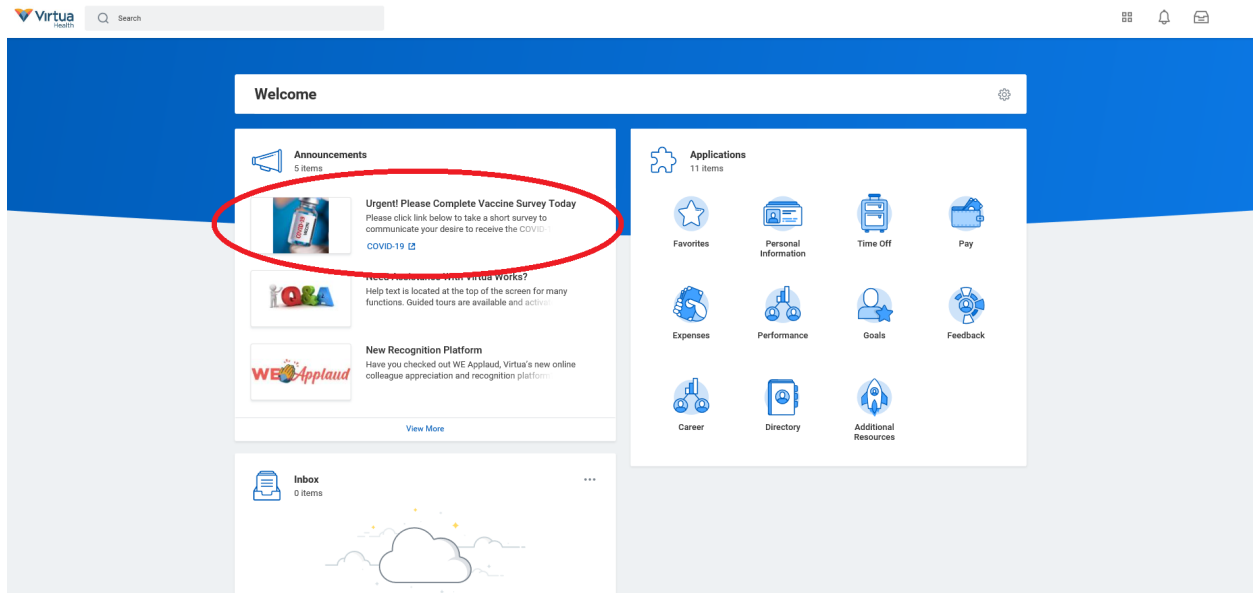
We know these questions only begin to scratch the surface and that information regarding vaccines is constantly evolving. We will continue to keep you informed as things progress. If you have specific question, contact us at VirtuaClinician@virtua.org.

Time-Sensitive Action: Take the COVID-19 Vaccine Survey Now

Virtua Health will likely receive its first shipment of a COVID-19 vaccine in mid-December. In-house teams are working diligently to orchestrate the process and want to hear from all colleagues about their desire to receive the vaccine in the near future.

Employed Physicians (VMG): Please visit Virtua Works on the VINE to complete a three-question survey about COVID-19 vaccinations. The survey link is on the left hand side of the Virtua Works homepage

under Announcements. (See image below.) Please encourage all the colleagues to complete the survey as well, regardless of whether they are in a patient-facing role.



Non-Employed Physicians: We have created a survey for you to gauge and track interest. Take the three-question survey here: <https://virtuamarketing.survey.fm/covid-20>.

Information about the vaccine and its distribution is ever-evolving. Please pay close attention to all Virtua communications over the next few weeks to ensure you do not miss vital information.

Did You Miss This Week's Annual Meeting? Watch Online

On Tuesday, a virtual 2020 annual meeting was held for the combined medical staffs of Virtua Marlton, Virtua Memorial, and Virtua Voorhees hospitals. We made a recording of the event, which can be found [here](#).

The meeting was hosted by Jennifer Khelil, DO, MBA, SVP and Chief Medical Officer. After a video keynote by Dennis Pullin, FACHE, President & CEO, a health system update was provided by Reginald Blaber, MD, MBA, FACC, Chief Clinical Officer. Campus updates were delivered by John J. Kirby, OTR/MBA, SVP & Chief Operating Officer, Virtua Memorial Hospital, and Paul E. Minnick DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FACHE, SVP & Chief Operating Officer, Virtua Voorhees Hospital/Virtua Marlton Hospital.

Representing Virtua Memorial Hospital, Medical Staff President Rakesh Gupta, MD, delivered a President's Message and presentation of awards, as did Shailen Shah, MD, Medical Staff President for Virtua Voorhees/Marlton Hospitals.

Congratulations to this year's awardees:

- Virtua Memorial Hospital:
 - President's Award: Emilio Mazza, MD
 - Physician Recognition Award: R. Alan Shubert, MD

- Distinguished Career Award: Jonathan Orwitz, MD
- Virtua Voorhees Hospital & Marlton Hospital:
 - President's Award: Martin Topiel, MD
 - Physician Recognition Award: Eric Szejman, MD
 - Distinguished Career Award: John Harding, MD

A Message from Chief Clinical Officer Reginald Blaber, MD, MBA, FACC

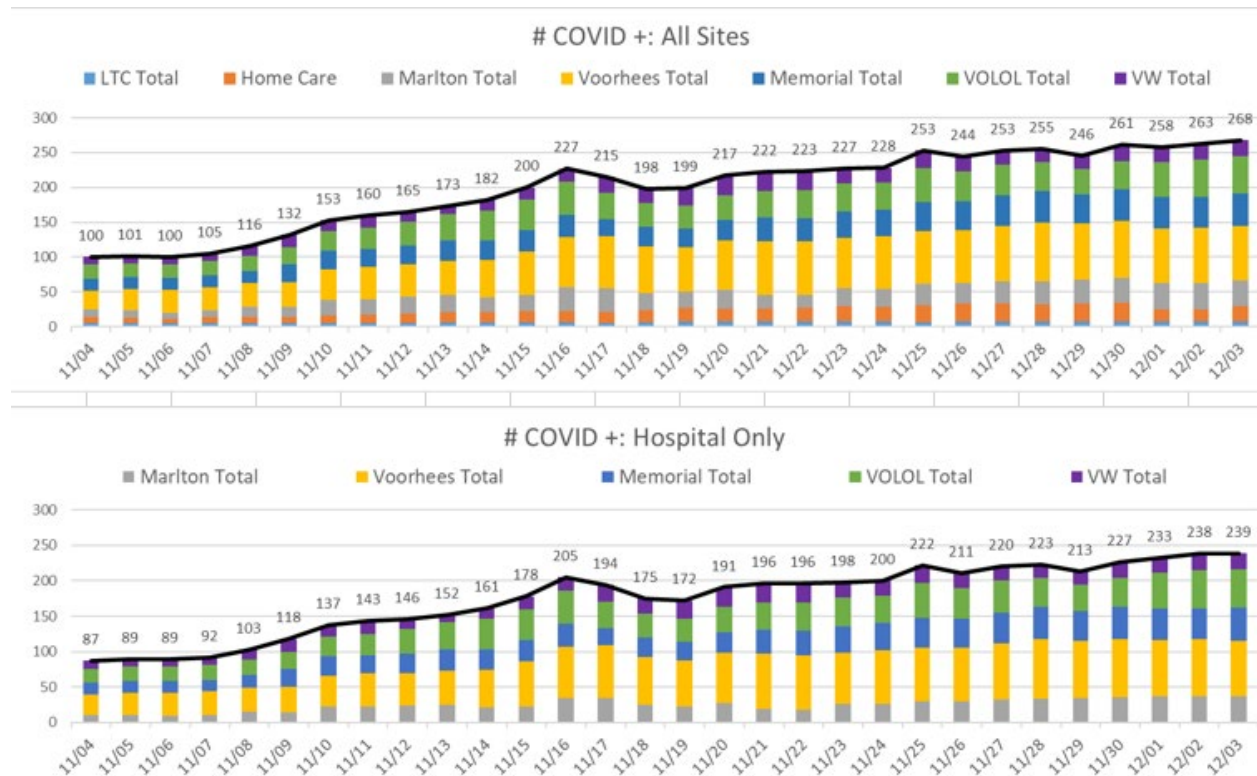
I am writing regarding an important safety issue and asking for your immediate attention to remedy if you have affected team members. We have seen some colleagues with facial hair in our patient care areas wearing an N95. **No colleague should be wearing an N95 at work at any time if facial hair interferes with the seal of a respirator** (view acceptable and unacceptable facial hair images through the link [here](#)). As you know, ensuring the respirator seal is a vital part of respiratory protection practices. Facial hair that lies along the sealing area of a respirator, such as beards, sideburns, or some mustaches, will interfere with respirators that rely on a tight face piece seal to achieve maximum protection. According to [CDC/NIOSH](#) research, **the presence of facial hair under the sealing surface causes 20 to 1,000 times more leakage** compared to clean-shaven individuals.

We are asking our clinicians to help us ensure no colleague is wearing an N95 at work if they have facial hair that interferes with the seal. Earlier this week, we asked Virtua leaders to immediately remove such colleagues from performing care that requires an N95 and to follow specific directives to address the situation. We have also developed guidance and forms for colleagues who request a religious exemption.

Thank you for your prompt attention and support of important matter.

By the Numbers

The following charts reflect the latest figures for Virtua-site cases of COVID-19.



Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey is currently at 1.06. While the rate of transmission has been coming down, spot positivity rates remain alarmingly high, with the South Jersey region at 12.3%.
- Locally, in the tri-county area, there have been a total of 1,423 confirmed deaths, as of 1 p.m. today. The state also reports “probable” deaths from COVID-19, with figures shared separately on the [state dashboard](#). For the three counties, probable deaths would account for an additional 108 fatalities.
- The total number of cases are as follows:
 - Burlington County 14,374
 - Camden County 20,231
 - Gloucester County 9,547

Travel Advisory Update

As of **Nov. 25**, the State of New Jersey readjusted its previous travel advisory metrics and now strongly discourages all non-essential travel beyond the immediate region (New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware).

The Department of Health will issue additional information in the coming days regarding travel precautions. Individuals should follow the state's current guidance until a new policy is issued. Click [here](#) to view additional details.

Virtua colleagues traveling internationally or beyond the immediate region are required to call the **colleague hotline at 609-444-2828** upon return for guidance and return-to-work instructions. Colleagues who traveled beyond the immediate region, provided they are not exhibiting symptoms, will return to work. Should screening indicate that a 14-day period of self-monitoring is required before returning to work, colleagues may be required to use their own paid time off and/or may need to take time off on an unpaid basis if no paid time off is available.

Colleague travel is strongly discouraged to ensure the health and safety of you, your family, your fellow colleagues, and patients.

Virtua Earns Prestigious Marketing Awards

Great momentum following new brand launch and department's digital transformation

Virtua Health recently received national recognition for marketing achievement in both [Modern Healthcare](#) and the [eHealthcare Leadership Awards](#). The hailed work represents important collaborations with executive, strategy, operations, and clinical teams in how Virtua continues to orient to the consumer.

Widely acknowledged as the leading source of business news, *Modern Healthcare* designed The Healthcare Marketing Impact Awards to recognize health care's best marketing campaigns in a variety of categories. Virtua won the **Gold Award for Digital Campaign of the Year** based on our ability to identify patients most at-risk for breast cancer and segment messages to an audience that was engaged by a rate that exceeded the industry averages by 300%. This award reflects a great partnership with Virtua's CRM (customer relationship marketing) vendor SymphonyRM.

With more than 1,000 entries in 20 categories, eHealthcare Leadership recorded one of its most competitive years. Virtua has been recognized in three categories by this leading health care marketing awards organization:

- **Best Healthcare Podcast – Silver Award.** This was the first year for Dennis W. Pullin's *Here for Good* podcast. Additional recognitions went to UCLA, Ochsner, and Beaumont. Click [here](#) to listen and/or view the latest episodes of the *Here for Good* podcast!
- **Best COVID Communications – Gold Award.** As the most populous category, Virtua stood out with the likes of Johns Hopkins, Mayo Clinic, Advocate Aurora, and Mt. Sinai for its efforts to keep people informed and engaged throughout the pandemic.
- **Best Integrated Campaign – Platinum Award.** This is the highest placement and was awarded for the Virtua Health brand launch, ranking above respected organizations such as Ochsner, Northwell, and Renown.

Carebridge Connects

Every month, Virtua's partner Carebridge offers webinars and resources to uplift your state of mind, encourage your personal growth, and enhance your sense of self.

January's webinar focuses on how stress contributes to diet, inflammation, and weight gain. Learn how hormones released during constant stress could be the reason behind weight gain or stand in the way of weight loss. Click [here](#) to view the webinar and use access code: Y6EXA.

Additionally, Carebridge invites you to read these articles: [5 Things You Should Know About Stress](#) and [Emotional Wellness Checklist](#).

Gary Banks Expresses His Thanks

Recently, 1,000 tubs of Johnson popcorn were delivered to the colleagues at Virtua Voorhees Hospital from grateful patient Gary Banks and his company, Banks Industrial Group (BIG). Many years ago, Virtua saved Gary's life, and he has never forgotten how wonderfully the team treated him and his family during a difficult time.

Gary and his team put together a "BIG Virtua Thank You" to share their gratitude. Click [here](#) to view the video.

It's Not Too Late to Give for Good!

Give for Good invites every Virtua colleague to support the Virtua program or service that is most meaningful to them. Haven't made a gift yet? It's not too late! Gifts of every size have a lasting impact, and convenient giving options are available. Click the Give for Good button on the VINE or visit GiveToVirtua.org/Colleagues to make a gift this year. Thank you for demonstrating your commitment to Virtua's Culture of WE!