

## **Clinician Update**

**Dec. 23, 2021**

### **New COVID-19 Trends Make Vaccination Ever More Critical to Containment**

Today New Jersey reached another troubling milestone with a record number of COVID-19 cases, [shattering the record set just yesterday](#), officials are urging people to take precautions with holiday gatherings.

Paul Minnick, president of Virtua Voorhees and Virtua Marlton hospitals, told Philadelphia TV station [CBS3](#), “What we’re hearing and what we’re being told is that omicron is so much more easily spread. We’re seeing it in younger patients, and we’re seeing that community spread where many people having exposures are not vaccinated.”

The latest wave of COVID-19 cases has challenged hospital staff in new ways as well. Like other Philadelphia-area hospitals, space is getting tight, but Virtua’s hospitals are still able to accommodate everyone who shows up.

Within the first 10 days of December, the number of COVID-19 patients at Virtua’s five hospitals spiked from 100 to 150, the vast majority of whom are unvaccinated.

“What’s different at this point is that it feels unrelenting,” Minnick said. He noted that many of Virtua’s COVID-19 patients could have avoided illness by getting vaccinated.

The best way to avoid a January surge is for people to get vaccinated and boosted while also wearing masks in public and practicing social distancing—important precautions since about 40% of Americans remain unvaccinated.

Please encourage your patients, friends, and family who have not received all three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine to do so as soon as possible.

The new Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega-Site, located in East Gate Square in Mount Laurel, is open Tuesdays through Saturdays. Appointments can be scheduled in minutes at [www.virtua.org/vaccine](http://www.virtua.org/vaccine). The mega-site will be closed on Dec. 24 and 25, but will return to regular hours on Dec. 28.

#### **A Late-breaking Message from Virtua Infection Control Officer Martin Topiel, MD:**

Because of the ineffectiveness of the present available monoclonal antibodies to omicron, it is likely we will discontinue that medication service until we receive the supply of the new product that has activity against the new variant. Final decisions are in the works and further details are forthcoming.

## **A Holiday Miracle that Comes in a Vial**

[NJ.com](#) this week published an article from Virtua President and CEO Dennis W. Pullin on the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 vaccine. Below, is an excerpt from the article.

“It was a year ago this week that the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine [arrived at New Jersey hospitals](#) like a much-anticipated holiday miracle. As I reflect on all that has transpired this past year, I find it well worth pausing to celebrate the countless number of lives that have been saved by the courageous efforts of our health care providers and the remarkable impact of these safe and effective vaccines. For this, we truly can be grateful.

“Sadly, however, today [we face nearly the same daunting surge of hospitalizations](#) as we did a year ago. Only this time, our health care workers are depleted in numbers and wearier in spirit. Many are asking how it is possible that we have a safe and proven solution to the sickness and death, yet are still in such a state of alarm. Too many Americans remain unvaccinated and, perhaps worse, unfazed by the consequences of their decision.

“The future of the COVID-19 pandemic is in our hands, literally. It’s not just about whether health care workers keep showing up or whether most people take the right precautions. The future depends on all of us and what we do collectively—for ourselves, for our families, for our colleagues, and our communities. It’s not an either/or moment; it’s an all-in-together moment.

“Let’s use this season to rewrite the ending of this public health story once and for all. Roll up your sleeves so you can reach out your arms and embrace the new year with renewed hope in humanity.”

Click to read the [full article](#)

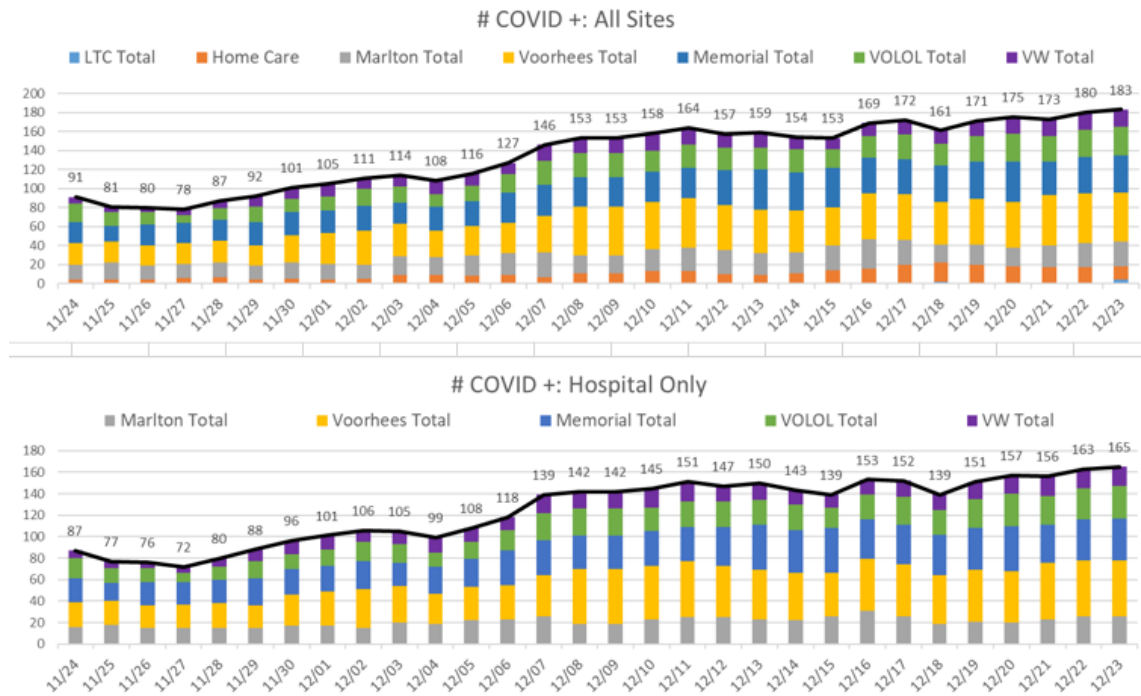
## **Holiday Risk Assessment**

Many of your patients may be inquiring about how to proceed with holiday plans. Granted, an online assessment is not the equivalent of medical advice from a trained professional and should be used for informational purposes only. But, we share it here as a good resource.

This [step-by-step risk assessment](#) was created by James McDeavitt, MD, executive vice president and dean of clinical affairs at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, and it is published in this [article by the Association of American Medical Colleges](#). It asks the user to assign a point value to different factors, including whether anyone at the gathering is at high risk for severe COVID-19 and the rate of community spread (both in the place where the gathering is taking place and where visitors are traveling from). Once various factors are tallied, the user will receive a score that reflects the risk level of the plan.

In a similar fashion, *The New York Times* has created a [simple quiz](#) to give holiday guidance. It asks questions like “Are you traveling?” and “Is anyone in your gathering unvaccinated?” to help inform safe decision-making.

## **COVID-19 Census**



### Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- As noted above, New Jersey is experiencing record-shattering new cases of COVID-19. Today there were a reported **15,482** new cases, and just yesterday there was a reported 9,711 confirmed COVID-19 cases, breaking the record for the most positive tests in any single day during the 22-month-old pandemic.
- The total number of cases as of 3 p.m. were as follows:
  - Burlington County: 54,003 cases
  - Camden County: 67,198 cases
  - Gloucester County: 37,654 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, and Gloucester counties: 3,041.
- The state’s Vaccination Overview dashboard reported 14,929,275 doses of vaccine have been administered.

### Virtua’s Network of Ambulatory Centers (ASCs) Now at 29—and Growing

Virtua recently welcomed Campus Eye Group ASC, LLC, in Hamilton, NJ, as its 29th ASC in a network that spans the entire state, with centers also in Pennsylvania and Delaware.

The new addition from Mercer County joins [28 other ambulatory surgery centers](#), all modern, state-of-the-art, health care facilities that transform the outpatient experience, providing the highest-caliber care for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures and surgery. All the facilities are state licensed, nationally accredited and Medicare certified, ensuring adherence to the highest quality and safety standards. Virtua’s ASCs provide a safe and convenient alternative to hospital-based outpatient care, with a strong track record of positive patient outcomes and satisfaction.

### Help your Community by Giving Blood

The American Red Cross is experiencing a dangerously low blood supply. Donors are needed now. Virtua is working with the Red Cross to host several upcoming blood drives. We invite you to join your colleagues in helping to maintain a sufficient blood supply. Click to [view eligibility](#) to donate blood.

**Tuesday, Dec. 28**

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Voorhees, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Thursday, Dec. 30**

Virtua Mount Holly Hospital, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Tuesday, Jan. 4**

Virtua Mount Holly Hospital, 10:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

**Thursday, Jan. 6**

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Moorestown, 2 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**Friday, Jan. 7**

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Berlin, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Virtua William G. Rohrer Fitness Center, 3 to 7 p.m.

**Friday, Jan. 21**

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Voorhees, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Signing up for blood drives is quick and easy. Appointments are preferred.

Scan the QR code or click to [sign up](#) and use sponsor code Virtua. We encourage all first-time donors to view this [video](#).

**Happy Holidays, Virtua Colleagues!**

'Tis the season to spread good will and holiday vibes among our fellow colleagues and the members of our community, especially those who need a bit of cheer this year.

As you sip your holiday eggnog, we invite you to enjoy the following photos from fellow colleagues who posted on the [Virtua Colleague Group page on Facebook](#). Additionally, Virtua Health President and CEO Dennis W. Pullin shared a special year-end recap of 2021 earlier this week. In case you missed it, check out what we've achieved together in this [video](#). To view more holiday photos and messages, visit the [Virtua Colleague Group on Facebook](#). We also encourage you to keep posting your holiday snapshots on the page with the hashtag #hellogood.

**Celebrating YOU this Holiday Season**

With great joy and gratitude, we celebrate YOU this holiday season as **1,191 Virtua colleagues** have made a difference through philanthropy at Virtua this year by participating in the Give for Good campaign—and we know that number will rise in the final days of 2021. From every department and every location, you have stepped forward to support the Virtua programs and services that mean the most to you. You are truly Here for Good!

The past 21 months have been challenging in ways we could never have imagined. More people in our community than ever have been in need of clinical care and support programs, and you answered the call. Together, we have stepped up for our community and for each other, saying “I’ve got your back.” It’s truly inspiring, and we are grateful.

We offer a special shout out to 65 colleagues who served as Give for Good Ambassadors this year. They have brought creativity and tireless energy to the campaign! The ambassadors are currently busy providing all of our colleague donors with a “Give for Good” notebook as a token of appreciation. If you haven’t received yours yet, please know that it is on the way. If you have any questions about your giving, your notebook, or anything else, please call the Office of Philanthropy at 856-355-0830, or email [gratitude@virtua.org](mailto:gratitude@virtua.org).

### **Special Musicians on Call Holiday Concert Available Online**

Musicians on Call held a special holiday concert last week for patients, families, and hospital colleagues across the country. The “Hope for the Holidays” virtual concert is still available for viewing up until Dec. 31.

*You can watch the concert here:*

**Link:** [https://connect.musiciansoncall.org/virtual\\_programs/holidays](https://connect.musiciansoncall.org/virtual_programs/holidays)

**Password:** lourdes

The concert features performances by Reba, Kelly Clarkson, Gavin DeGraw, Leslie Odom Jr., Lauren Alaina, Maddie and Tae, and Cassadee Pope.

### **Santa Paws is Coming to Town**

Virtua’s Visiting Paws pet therapy program invites colleagues to spend quality time with furry friends at Virtua’s hospitals. These pups are Here for Good and here for belly scratches. View the schedule below.

#### **Virtua Voorhees Hospital**

**Thursday, Jan. 6,** 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Holman D Conference Room

#### **Virtua Marlton Hospital**

**Thursday, Jan. 13,** 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Conference Room next to the Starbucks

#### **Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital**

**Thursday, Jan. 20,** 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Wellness Room and Lobby

#### **Virtua Mount Holly Hospital**

**Friday, Jan. 21,** 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Front and Back Conference Center, First Floor

#### **Virtua Willingboro Hospital**

**Thursday, Jan. 27,** 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Conference Room A

Please connect with Katelynn Hewitt at [mhewitt@virtua.org](mailto:mhewitt@virtua.org), or call x72676 with any questions. Click to view the [flyer](#).

**Have a Happy and Restful Holiday Season**

Because of the upcoming holiday week, there will not be an issue of *Clinician Update* next **Thursday, Dec. 30**. The editors wish you a safe, healthy holiday. We hope you get to have some needed time off to refresh. We will see you again in 2022!