

Clinician Update

December 7, 2023

Surgical Group of South Jersey Joins Virtua Medical Group

Virtua Medical Group (VMG) is pleased to welcome long-time and valued partner Surgical Group of South Jersey (SGSJ) to the Virtua family. SGSJ will now be known as Virtua Surgical Group - Cherry Hill and Virtua Surgical Group - Sewell. The group features 13 providers and 20 staff members and serves the community by providing surgical services in colorectal, general, and vascular specialties.

“We are very excited for what this means for the community we serve,” said Craig Zaretsky, MD, chair department of surgery, Virtua South, and vice president of clinical operations for VMG. These clinicians will continue to provide expert care at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes, Virtua Marlton, and Virtua Voorhees hospitals as they have been doing for over 30 years.”

Patty Lubrano, MSN, RN, FACHE, vice president of operations for VMG said, “With this news, we honor the rich tradition of surgical excellence established by SGSJ while forging a new path in advanced care and medical education together in our region.”

To see a picture of the team, [click here](#).

Virtua’s Structural Heart and Electrophysiology Teams First in Region to Test New Device

Virtua performed the first implants of a next generation left atrial appendage (LAA) occlusion device in the Mid-Atlantic region this week. Patients were implanted as part of the Boston Scientific Heal LAA study that will be testing a new Watchman left atrial appendage occlusion device. The device has a Hemocoat coating designed to enhance early healing. Virtua is the first center in the Philadelphia area enrolling in this trial and with access to the new device.

LAA occlusion devices are designed to block off the area of the heart where the vast majority of blood clots form in patients with atrial fibrillation. When these clots form, they most often travel to the brain and are one of the most common causes of strokes.

Traditionally, patients are prescribed blood thinners when they develop atrial fibrillation. Some patients, however, do not do well on anticoagulation due to a variety of factors. These patients may be considered candidates for an LAA occlusion device.

All current devices require months of anticoagulation or dual anti-platelet therapy (DAPT) while they are healing in place to prevent blood clots from forming on top of the device. This can cause bleeding in the recovery period from the procedure.

“This will be the first clinical testing of a new device that is designed to promote faster endothelialization (coverage of prosthetic material with the body's own vascular tissue lining) of the

surface of the device with tissue,” said Virtua electrophysiologist and primary site investigator Darius Sholevar, MD. “This is an exciting step in the treatment of people with atrial fibrillation. The Heal LAA study is an early study of the use of coated LAA occlusion devices using traditional anticoagulation or DAPT. We hope that the findings of this study will lead to improved healing after device implant.”

The enrollment of the first four patients in the trial last Friday marks an important step forward for cardiovascular care and the research and EP programs at Virtua.

Expansion of Research Trials in Interventional Cardiology

Virtua’s research team has long been participating in groundbreaking clinical trials, and that continues to grow. We are pleased to announce that Virtua Marlton and Virtua Mount Holly hospitals have joined Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes as research study locations in interventional cardiology.

“Now with three locations, we are able to enroll even more of our cardiac patients in trials involving the latest procedures and equipment,” said lead interventionalist Ibrahim Moussa, DO, FACC, FSCAI, RPVI. “These leading-edge technologies and approaches truly can provide lifesaving options for our patients.”

For more information on clinical trials, contact Virtua’s director of research administration, Jillian Stanley, at jstanley@virtua.org.

Virtua’s Emergency Room Wait Times Among Shortest in Region

The Philadelphia Inquirer recently reported on how half of emergency room visits in the region’s hospitals last 210 minutes, according to federal data. Virtua Voorhees and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes hospitals were noted as nearly an hour shorter than that, at 164 and 160 minutes respectively.

The news is not surprising to Dennis Guest, DO, vice president of clinical operations. “Safety, quality of care, and patient experience all matter tremendously in our service to our community,” he said. “We remain a team across the board committed to that dedication as we serve each patient.”

Virtua Among Best Maternity Hospitals Nationwide

U.S. News & World Report has named all three Virtua hospitals with maternity divisions to its 2024 list of Best Hospitals for Maternity Care. Virtua Mount Holly, Virtua Voorhees, and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes hospitals each earned the distinction.

“This recognition by *U.S. News* affirms Virtua’s exceptional quality of care for parents and their newborns. At Virtua, we not only deliver the most babies, we’re also one of the best places to give birth,” said Nicole Lamborne, MD, vice president of clinical operations for women’s services at Virtua.

Read in [U.S. News](#), [Becker’s Hospital Review](#), and [New Jersey Family](#).

Virtua Urgent Care Surpasses 100K Visits

Virtua Urgent Care leaders shared that they surpassed the 100,000-visit mark for the first time ever (with one month left to go in the year!). Thank you for providing outstanding urgent care service to our families, friends, neighbors, and fellow colleagues.

Addressing the Crisis of Loneliness in Young People

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy visited Camden County College this past week to speak to students about the public health crisis of profound loneliness and social isolation—and why young people are most at risk for them. “Loneliness and isolation are more common than diabetes,” he said. “It’s more common than obesity in America, which we recognize is a public health challenge. And the numbers are much higher among young people.”

President of Virtua Medical Staff South S. Jay Mirmanesh, MD, MBA, is a board of trustee with the college and was able to discuss these issues directly with the surgeon general. “We had a meaningful conversation about adolescent and adult isolation, depression, and anxiety. As a pediatrician, I know these are behavioral and social topics we need to be speaking openly about, not only as clinicians, but as parents, and as caring members of the community. Such conversations about mental health can be potentially lifesaving.”

The surgeon general urged students to find opportunities to build meaningful interactions with the people in their lives and challenged them to try three types of outreach—express gratitude, extend support, ask for help—once a day, for five days.

“It’s a beginning,” said Dr. Mirmanesh. “The beginning of something we all will need to work on together.”

To learn more about Dr. Mirmanesh’s meeting with the surgeon general, [click here](#) on LinkedIn. For a news article on the visit, [click here](#).

Dennis Pullin Nationally Named One of the Most Influential in 2023

Virtua President and CEO Dennis Pullin has been recognized by *Modern Healthcare* as one of the "100 Most Influential People" for 2023.

This prestigious recognition is one of the highest honors for individuals in our industry. It celebrates leaders who push boundaries and shape the future of health care.

Since joining Virtua in 2017, Dennis has been a force for good in South Jersey. From addressing health equity through our expanding fleet of mobile health programs to charting out the workforce of the future—Dennis is committed to ensuring quality care is available to all.

Click to [view the full list](#).

More of Virtua in the News

Virtua Recognized for Antimicrobial Stewardship

All five Virtua hospitals have been recognized with the Antimicrobial Stewardship Center of Excellence Designation by the Infectious Disease Society of America. Institutions that receive this designation have created stewardship programs led by infectious diseases-trained physicians and pharmacists who advance science in fighting antimicrobial resistance, which is an urgent global health threat. Read in [Gloucester City News](#) and [Burlington County Chamber of Commerce](#).

Hospitals Innovate to Address Provider Shortage

John Matsinger, DO, EVP and chief operating officer, shared how Virtua is retaining colleagues and expanding its future workforce. For instance, Virtua offers an inclusive culture and opportunities for job flexibility. And its academic affiliation with Rowan University is expanding Virtua's physician residency program and enhancing nursing-school opportunities. Read in [NJBiz](#).

Age Bias Has Real World Health Effects

Both ageism and an older person's perception of aging may affect their longevity, according to new research from the New Jersey Institute for Successful Aging at Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine. The study shows that ageist attitudes and negative self-perceptions of aging directly affect an older person's physical and mental health. Read in [Association for Health Care Journalists](#).

Hundreds of Reasons Why Virtua is So Good

Take a glimpse into the remarkable moments at Virtua with our [newest Wow-WE video](#). Highlights of our clinicians include milestones surpassed in transplant and robotic surgeries, as well as the Practicing Excellence Clinician Leader of the Year award, a transplant milestone, pickleball with Howard Weinberg, DO, big time generosity led by Eric Szejman, MD, as well as more than 200 physicians at our medical staff meeting and much, much more!

Virtua Is "All In" on Excellence

Thank you for being *All In on Excellence*! This week, we continue our progress in the second chapter of our *All In* program. With your team or on your own, view the second tip of the series: "Everyone Matters: Becoming Challengers." Click to [view the tip](#).

It is critical that all colleagues who have not yet completed the Patient Experience Certification Program make doing so a priority **before Dec. 31**.

Visit the [Practicing Excellence page](#) on the Colleague Corner to view and share the Patient Experience tips with your teams.

Congratulations to Bethzaida Ortiz, RN, of 4 South at Virtua Marlton Hospital and Angela Garcia, MA, of Virtua Surgical Group – Hainesport, who responded to the Practicing Excellence reflection question as part of our recent contest. Each won two tickets to Mariah Carey Christmas at the Wells Fargo Center.

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:

- “Is this what doctor visits are supposed to be? Being personalized, informative, patient, caring, kind, sincere, and above all else, focusing on the patients’ needs and concerns? Well, I tell ya, she is the bees knees of awesome OB/GYNs, best that I ever EVER came across! I finally felt heard and safe in the doctor’s office. Thank you, Dr. Kaufman. You have no idea how much this means to me and the impact of trust you gave me with my health care overall!” (Sheila Kaufman, CNM)
- “Everyone on his staff is very polite, and very efficient. They listened to me when I was talking. Very compassionate!” (Robert Schimenti, MD)
- “I have been going to Dr. Mabanta for 30 years for migraines and other neurological issues, and he has taken me through thick and thin. I have complete faith and trust in his medical expertise, and his bedside manner can't be beat. He has never failed to be caring and to take his time in all the years I've seen him.” (Ricardo Mabanta, MD)
- “I met with him for a travel medicine consultation. He was timely, thorough, and easy to speak to. I did not feel rushed, and my questions received well-thought-out answers. I would definitely revisit him in the future.” (Frederick Klinger, DO)
- “He has the best bedside manner of a primary care physician I've seen in a long time. Makes you feel really comfortable. Takes his time to explain step-by-step the tests and why they need to be done. He doesn't make you feel like you are doing something wrong. Rather, he helps you and explains the things to do right. It's really hard to find a primary care physician you feel comfortable with visiting. I think I'll stay for a while.” (Arnold Fontanilla, DO)

Voting Extended for 2024 Top Docs for Kids

SJ Mag Media is extending the 2024 Top Docs for Kids voting to **Jan. 12, 2024** for both the doctors ballot and patient polls.

To vote, complete the [physician's ballot here](#). The online voting link is a private link. Please do not forward it or share it to anyone who is not a physician practicing in South Jersey. Physicians must provide their name, practice name and medical license number to cast their ballot. The physicians you nominate must work in South Jersey. Only physicians may cast a ballot.

Similarly, the [patient poll](#) is open and can be shared with patients. And, if you'd like to see last year's Top Docs for Kids, [click here](#).

Separately, looking ahead, the *SJ Mag Media* 2024 Top Docs distinction will be on the ballot in April. That poll will honor physicians chosen by their peers—and patients—and will be published in September. More details on that when the polling opens. To see 2023's Top Docs, click [here](#).

Updated Notice of Non-Discrimination

Virtua's Notice of Non-Discrimination policy has been updated to additionally reference the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination and the protections it provides to those using public accommodations, such as Virtua's medical facilities.

Consistent with federal and state civil rights laws, Virtua does not discriminate, exclude people, or treat them differently on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, marital status, civil union status, domestic partnership status, pregnancy or breastfeeding, sex, gender identity or expression, affectional or sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, or liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States or nationality of such person.

The updated policy can be found on the Colleague Corner, under the Administrative Leadership Manual, or on Virtua.org. If you have any questions, please contact Corporate Compliance.

Sharing the Community Health Needs Assessment

As noted last week in *Clinician Update*, the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) takes place every three years through a rigorous and inclusive process in accordance with the Affordable Care Act. It generates robust, shared regional data for collective action on the part of the collaborative to further the commitment to community health and population health management. We understand that for some, last week's links may not have opened correctly, so we are reposting them here.

[Click here for the CHNA 2022 report.](#)

[Click here for the Community Health Improvement Plan \(2023-25\)](#)

[Click here for New Jersey Community Center & Health Resources | Virtua](#)

For questions or more information, contact senior project manager of community-based services Bageshree Cheulkar at bcheulkar@virtua.org.

From the Hello Good Mailbox on What's Happening

The Learning Lab at Virtua Voorhees Hospital is proud to announce an upgrade to its simulation equipment. The team introduced Victoria, an ultra-high fidelity birthing mannequin, to enhance educational experiences. To celebrate, the team hosted a “birthday party” in her honor. If you're interested in meeting Victoria and her new baby, please contact [Melissa Weissman](#), director of clinical practice and education.

Dec. 3 to 9 is National Handwashing Awareness Week. It is dedicated to helping people remain healthy one hand wash at a time. As you well know, practicing good hand hygiene is a simple yet effective way to prevent infections.

Upcoming Events

Quarterly Cardiology Grand Rounds

Mark Your Calendar for Dec. 20, 7 to 8 a.m.

Please join us for the next Virtua Cardiology Grand Rounds. Our guest will be Rupal O’Quinn, MD, MHCI, FACC, director, cardio-oncology, Penn Presbyterian Medical Center and associate professor of clinical medicine (cardiovascular medicine). This session will cover the importance of cardio-oncology and cancer therapy related to cardiac dysfunction; diagnosis and management of cancer therapy-related cardiac dysfunction; and recognition of common cardiovascular side effects occurring from newer cancer therapies and optimal management of these toxicities. The target audience is physicians and the interprofessional teams. To register for this online event, click [here](#). To learn more, click to [view the flyer](#).

Dates Announced for Holiday Gatherings

For those who may have missed [last week's Clinician Update](#), we want to make sure you know about our upcoming festive gatherings. This is your invitation to join in the fun! [Here is the detailed schedule](#). We encourage one and all to come together, interact, and enjoy a meal. For those based in locations not listed, you are warmly invited to join the nearest campus event. Let's bridge distances and celebrate as one big Virtua Health family.

We can't wait to see you there and share in the holiday cheer!

IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

We focus on the upcoming observances of **Hanukkah** and **Las Posadas**.

[Hanukkah](#), the Jewish festival of lights, begins tonight at sundown. There are numerous ways to support our Jewish colleagues. For those who celebrate Hanukkah, send well-wishes, light, and comfort during this time. *Chag Sameach* to those participating in this holiday!

[Las Posadas](#), a nine-day religious observance traditionally celebrated in Mexico and parts of Latin America, begins on **Dec 16**. This holiday highlights the procession of Mary and Joseph's search for an inn prior to the birth of Jesus. *Feliz Las Posadas* to those celebrating!