

Clinician Update
Feb. 10, 2022

Where the Heart Is

With Heart Month underway and Valentine's Day approaching, what better time than now to showcase the good around us at Virtua Health from the past few weeks. We invite you to view and enjoy this [heart-warming Wow-WE video montage](#). It's so good to see you!

To amplify our appreciation for all of our colleagues, Virtua has lined the walkways outside the employee entrances at all five Virtua hospitals with **heart-shaped signs** that resemble traditional "conversation hearts" candies. The signs carry messages like *U R #1*, *We Heart You*, and *#hellogood*. The signs are meant to brighten the day of Virtua colleagues entering and leaving the hospitals.

"There's a lot of good around us and certainly within each other if we take the time to see it," said Chrisie Scott, SVP and chief marketing officer. "We think people generally enjoy being thought of and appreciated, and Virtua sure has a lot of love for our hospital teams and all those who dedicate their lives to serving others."

Drs. Monika and Jason Smith are both committed to the health care profession—and each other. As they prepare to celebrate their 16th Valentine's Day as a married couple, they reflect on how their physician training has benefited their personal and professional lives.

"It taught us how to listen with empathy to each other," said Monika, who is the first woman to serve as head of the emergency department at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. "It's what I love about having two doctors in a relationship. We apply that to our patients and to each other."

Jason, director of the cardiac care unit at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes, added, "Valentine's Day is a good reminder to celebrate love. The world needs love more than ever. Be kind to each other. Plus, February is Heart Month, which is a reminder to take care of your heart and take care of each other."

This is sound advice that our Virtua colleagues were happy to demonstrate and share. They showed their support for Heart Month by wearing their favorite shade of red on National Wear Red Day (Feb. 4).

View the snapshots and check out more photos on the [Virtua Colleague Facebook page](#). Virtua Health wishes you a Happy Valentine's Day and Happy Heart Month.

Booster Shot Now Requirement for Virtua Colleagues

Today Virtua's EVP and Chief Clinical Officer Reginald Blaber, MD, FACC sent a message to all colleagues announcing that Virtua Health has added the requirement of a booster vaccine for Virtua colleagues and contractors covered by the booster mandate contained in New Jersey Executive Order 283 (EO 283). He noted that "while the Executive Order excludes certain employees, such as those working remotely or in the corporate offices, we strongly encourage a booster shot for all colleagues."

Dr. Blaber wrote, "As we near the second anniversary of the global pandemic disrupting our lives, the magnitude of our role as a major health system committed to the values and purpose of being *Here for*

Good has grown even more meaningful. Never wavering from our calling and responsibilities, we have kept our patients and our community at the center of our actions and have prioritized the safety and wellbeing of our workforce at every step.

“The CDC has reported that vaccinated people who receive a COVID-19 booster are likely to have stronger protection against contracting and transmitting COVID-19, and stronger protection against serious illness, including hospitalizations and death. Our own experience at Virtua over the past six weeks is in line with a recent study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*: severe illness and death were notably lower among those who were boosted than those who only completed the first series.

“To ensure that we continue to follow the science and do everything possible to protect our colleagues and our patients, we are adding the requirement of a booster shot for Virtua colleagues and contractors covered by the booster mandate contained in New Jersey Executive Order 283 (EO 283). While the Executive Order excludes certain employees, such as those working remotely or in the corporate offices, we strongly encourage a booster shot for all colleagues.

“Specifically, EO 283 obliges health care settings to require workers to provide proof that they are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations, including having received a booster shot when eligible. This order necessitates “covered workers” (all employees and contractors, whether patient-facing or administrative) to provide proof to Virtua that they **have received a booster shot by Feb. 28, 2022, or within 3 weeks of becoming eligible for a booster dose**, whichever is later.

“Vaccine requirements have been long-standing in health care settings to not only safeguard the staff in a high-risk employment environment but to protect the immunocompromised and vulnerable patients they interact with. As we exceed 900,000 American deaths due to the pandemic, and as we recover from the largest surge and the worst positivity rate since the first wave of the virus, it is our obligation to follow the vaccine mandates and to play our critical part to protect the lives and health of our colleagues and patients.”

Boosters may be scheduled at the Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega-Site in Mount Laurel, visit virtua.org/vaccine. For additional vaccine locations across the region, consult the [New Jersey Vaccine Appointment Finder](#). Additional questions and answers can be found [here](#) or on the [COVID-19 Resource Center](#) on the VINE.

COVID-19 Response by the Numbers

As we close in on the second anniversary of the pandemic in New Jersey, the state hit two big vaccination milestones.

- The state passed the 90% mark for those eligible having at least one vaccination shot.
- The state passed the 50% mark for those eligible getting their booster.
- Additionally, the rate of transmission—the rate at which COVID-19 spreads—is at 0.5, or well below the desired 1.0 or smaller line.

Gov. Phil Murphy announced these numbers at his COVID briefing this week with a sense of caution.

“Even with these dropping numbers, none of us are yet at a point where we feel totally comfortable,” he said. “We saw last winter how the numbers can quickly turn back around, and we do not want to test that theory with omicron. So, we have to remain on an extremely vigilant footing.”

However, the governor continued to be optimistic, reporting that hospitalizations are two-thirds below the omicron peak of 6,089 on Jan. 11.

At Virtua, the metrics are trending in an encouraging direction as well. We have had a 65% decrease in COVID-positive patients since Virtua’s peak on Jan. 11.

Kudos to the long-term care teams for safeguarding our residents and patients through the omicron surge.

Thanks also to Virtua’s Dr. Sam Weiner, who participated in Camden County’s virtual COVID-19 update alongside county officials. The update touched upon testing clinics, school operations, vaccination rates, and more.

“I think we are at a place where we can finally take a sigh of relief,” Dr. Weiner said. “Outside our hospitals, we are seeing a decrease in the number of symptomatic patients coming into our urgent care centers and primary care offices. It is such welcome news.”

Watch the full discussion [here](#).

Public Health Officials Emphasize Importance of COVID Vaccines for Children

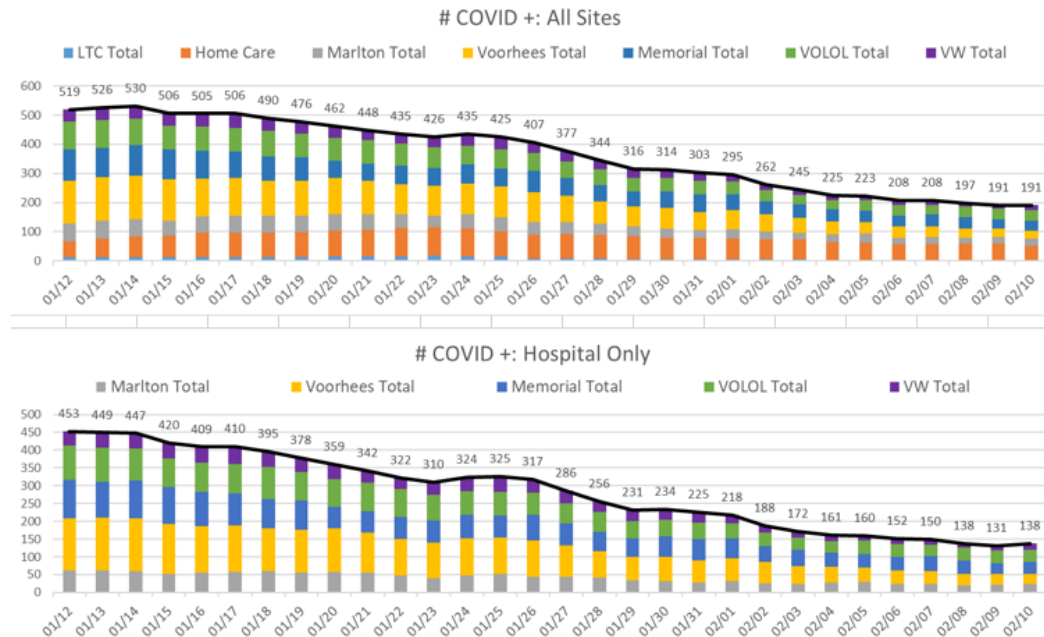
Data from the New Jersey Department of Health shows that just over 25% N.J. children ages 5 to 11 are fully vaccinated against COVID. Even though the latest COVID wave is diminishing, pediatricians and public health officials stress the importance of protecting young people through vaccination. This is, in part, because a new COVID variant could quickly emerge and, in part, because Gov. Phil Murphy stated his intention to lift mask requirements in schools beginning in March.

In regards to underwhelming pediatric vaccination participation, Dr. Mike Cascarina, president of the New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians, said, "There is this large undercurrent of vaccine hesitancy among the young... not young children, but young parents."

Dr. Melissa Stockwell, pediatrician and Chief of the Division of Child and Adolescent Health at Columbia University's Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, said many parents are taking a wait-and-see approach, but that “more than 8 million children in this country got at least one dose so far, and that's a really good data set... We now have more experience with this vaccine than so many others.”

Kids and adults alike are able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine quickly and easily at the Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega-Site. Find details at virtua.org/vaccine.

COVID-19 Census



Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey was last reported yesterday as 0.50.
- The total number of cases reported today:
 - Burlington County: 81,268 cases
 - Camden County: 102,044 cases
 - Gloucester County: 53,463 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, and Gloucester counties: 3,945.
- The state's Vaccination Overview dashboard last reported 16,553,273 doses of vaccine have been administered.

Leadership Promotions Announced

Several of our leaders are transitioning to important new positions that will help Virtua grow and expand our influence in our community. Congratulations to our colleagues in their well-earned leadership advancements.

Donna Antenucci promoted to Senior Vice President CIN Operations — Donna has unique knowledge of and operational experience in value-based care that is unequaled in the region. Under her leadership, the two clinically integrated networks brought together 257 primary care physicians and over 1,000 specialists into an organization that has achieved stellar quality, cost savings results, and network integrity. She has also worked closely with human resources to improve employee health outcomes through novel care management models for those with significant chronic medical conditions. Additionally, she has introduced remote patient monitoring technology to Virtua Health, decreasing readmission rates while improving our patients' experience with our care. This technology is now the foundation of our emerging Hospital at Home program.

Dr. Sam Weiner promoted to VP and Chief Medical Officer, Virtua Medical Group — Sam has been with VMG since 2008, when his primary care practice was among the first to be acquired by Virtua. He started his leadership journey in primary care, and expanded his scope of responsibility into urgent care, occupational health, and multiple medical specialty practices. Sam participated in the first cohort of Virtua’s Physician Leadership Program in 2012, and completed the Health Management Academy’s physician leadership program in 2016. He earned a master of medical management degree from Carnegie Mellon University in 2020. Sam’s thoughtful and pragmatic approach to clinical and operational initiatives across the ambulatory practices has been instrumental to our quality and financial success. As chief medical officer for VMG, he will have oversight of clinical operations for the medical group, including VMG’s quality and value-based initiatives, and will help to drive practice business development and strategic growth.

Rita Veterano promoted to Senior Vice President, Integrated Care Management and Home Care — Rita has led case management, utilization review, and clinical triage to great success. Her teams also very effectively support VMG with psychotherapy and social work services. In 2020, she expanded the triage team’s role to support patients with COVID in response to unprecedented community need for information. Also in 2020, she assumed the leadership of Home Care Services, leading a cultural transformation, consolidation of bargaining units, improved patient outcomes, and a marked improvement in financial results.

Jim Newman promoted to Vice President, Patient Logistics — Joining Virtua over 20 years ago, Jim has a history of progressive experience in leadership, strategic operations, and business development. Jim has been responsible for many successful initiatives, most recently the development of Virtua Medical Transport, and the expansion of the Virtua Transfer Center. He will continue to provide executive oversight for the Emergency Medical Services division, Medical Transport, EMS/AHA education, Medcom Communications, and the Transfer Center. In addition, he will be responsible for the strategic growth and integration of enterprise-wide Patient Logistics. Jim received a master of business administration and master of science from Columbia Southern University, and is currently pursuing his doctor of business administration.

Maryann Graham promoted to AVP, Practice Education & Clinical Outcomes, Virtua Medical Group — Maryann has been with VMG since 2017. She worked previously at Jefferson as the senior manager of Clinical Integration & Quality, and has extensive experience in practice management and operations. Maryann leads the VMG Clinical Operations, Quality, and Care Coordination teams. She led the 200-plus VMG practices through the operational quality and safety challenges of the COVID pandemic. She ensured our colleagues and patients’ safety by being creative and nimble. Maryann’s expertise in value-based contracts and care coordination has led VMG to exceptional performance, resulting in over \$40 million in revenue obtained through the CPC+ program and other value-based contracts. Maryann has successfully transitioned our primary care practices from CPC+ to the Primary Care First program. She will continue to spearhead this and other innovative value-based programs, which aim to improve quality and reduce the cost of care.

Virtua Physician to Moderate NJ Healthcare Quality Institute Panel on Primary Care

The New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute (NJHCQI) will be hosting its second installment of its virtual series: *Primary Care as a Common Good*. The second webinar, entitled “The Case for Increasing Our Investment in High Quality Primary Care,” on Wednesday, Feb. 23, 12 to 2 p.m., focuses on how states are choosing to invest in primary care to create a healthier and more equitable health care system.

There will be two panels of experts familiar with states already measuring, reporting, and setting targets to increase investment in primary care and how that may be accomplished through primary care payment transformation. One of the panels will be moderated by Mary Campagnolo, MD, Virtua family physician and geriatrician, medical director of Virtua Medical Group Value-Based Programs and Payer Contracts, clinician in practice at Virtua Primary Care of Mansfield, and Director on the Board of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Her panel is on specifics of “Primary Care Investment in New Jersey.” For more information on the free program and to register, click [here](#).

Virtua in the News

- **Virtua Orthopedic Surgeon Performs Innovative ACL Restoration** — A new type of implant treats tears of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), a common knee injury. **Orthopedic surgeon** Dr. Sean McMillan, at Virtua Orthopedics & Spine, is the first in the state to perform the procedure. His patient was a college athlete who traveled from California for the surgery. Watch on [CBS 3](#) or read in [the Burlington County Times](#).
- **Protocols to Keep Pregnant Moms and Babies Safe** — Over the past few years, Virtua has increased maternal safety in multiple ways, from lowering C-section rates to assessing patients’ risk of hemorrhage. This story focuses on an expectant mom with a life-threatening condition, and how Virtua OB/GYN Dr. Nurain Fuseini and his team ensured a safe delivery for mother and baby. Read [here](#).
- **Virtua Offers Lessons in Creating a Digital Transformation Office** — Top executives and health information technology leaders “have much to learn from [Virtua’s] massive digital health overhaul,” reported *Healthcare IT News*. The publication’s deep dive into Virtua’s digital evolution includes insights from Virtua’s Dr. Tarun Kapoor, Dr. Angela Skrzynski, and Danielle Wilson. Read part 1 [here](#) and part 2 [here](#).
- **Virtua Leader Named a Safety Director of the Year Finalist** — *Campus Safety Magazine* has named Virtua Health AVP of environmental services, security, and safety Paul Sarnese as a finalist for its Health Care Campus Safety Director of the Year awards. Learn more and check out a photo gallery with other Virtua colleagues [here](#).

Coping with a COVID Loss – Complimentary Support Group

The Samaritan Center for Grief Support is offering a six-week online grief support group for those who have lost someone they care about due to COVID. Samaritan’s professional bereavement specialist can help you process your grief.

Date: Thursday, March 3

Time: 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Registration is required; call 856-596-8550 or email CFGcounseling@SamaritanNJ.org. The link to the support group will be sent upon registration.

Help Our Community by Giving Blood

Virtua invites all [eligible Virtua colleagues](#) to make a significant impact in our communities by donating blood. The current situation is dire as 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 encourage you to help maintain a sufficient blood supply by [donating at a Virtua location](#) (listed below) or another drive in the region.

Friday, Feb. 18

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

Monday, Feb. 21

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Washington Township, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 22

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

Monday, Feb. 28

Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Moorestown, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tuesday, March 1

Virtua Mount Holly Hospital, 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Friday, March 4

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

Monday, March 7

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

Tuesday, March 8

303 Lippincott Drive, Marlton, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Friday, March 11

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

Thursday, March 17

Virtua Willingboro Hospital and First Baptist Church, 2 to 7 p.m.

First Baptist Church, 216 Sunset Rd., Willingboro, NJ

Friday, March 18

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

Signing up for blood drives is quick and easy. Appointments are preferred. Click to [sign up](#) and use sponsor code Virtua. We encourage all first-time donors to view this [video](#).

Honor a Colleague

As you reflect on the past year, you may find you have a colleague who made an organizational impact by going above and beyond in living our Culture of WE, providing service to our community, and/or driving quality and safety through high reliability.

We invite you to take a moment to enter your nomination! Click to [access the WE Awards criteria](#). Click peopleareeverything.com/virtua to submit your nomination in WE Applaud today!