

Clinician Update February 8, 2024

With your busy schedules in mind, we are experimenting with a way to expedite the delivery of this important clinician messaging to you. **If you are interested in an abbreviated audio version of *Clinician Update*, [click here](#).**

Virtua Clinical Research Team Continues Great Strides

2023 was a bountiful year of accomplishment for the Virtua Clinical Research Team. These researchers participated in 77 clinical trials, with 24 trials already on the docket for 2024.

“The scientific knowledge we gain today translates into improved care for patients,” said Robert Post, MD, MS, FAAFP, who serves as medical director for research and CME, and is chairman of the Virtua Research Investigator Committee.

Clinicians serve an integral role in research at Virtua, which includes studies with potential new therapies for cardiovascular, pulmonary, orthopedics, hepatology, GI, gynecologic diseases, and nursing research. The rapid development of new drugs, therapies, and devices has created a dramatic increase in the number of clinical research studies that highlights the need for greater participation by clinicians. Surgeons, pathologists, radiologists, NPs, PAs, and many other specialists all help improve the clinical research enterprise even when they are not participating as an investigator.

“Also, with our Rowan collaboration, we have increased our range to include Rowan physicians, residents, and medical students,” said AnneMarie Palatnik, DNP, RN, ACNS-BC, Vice President of Clinical Learning and Research. “We will soon include transplantation medicine and health equity. Grant funded trials have similarly taken a prominent place in our research arena. The future is bright, and we’re finding great reward in what we are accomplishing as a team.”

All clinicians are welcome to reach out to learn more on how to participate. If interested, you will receive education and training in the fundamentals of research design and methodology, as well as in-depth training on the trial itself. The trials are in many therapeutic areas, and the team will accommodate finding a study of your particular interest.

If you would like to learn more about Virtua Clinical Research, [reach Jillian Stanley](#), director of research administration.

Dr. Louis Balsama Joins Expanding Virtua Bariatric Program

The Virtua bariatric surgery program has added a new surgeon. Louis Balsama, DO, FACS, joined the team this week. Dr. Balsama has over 24 years of experience in the medical field and has been performing bariatric surgery in the South Jersey area since 2005.

“We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Balsama to our talented team,” said Samuel Wasser, MD, FACS, FASMBS, medical director of bariatric surgery at Virtua. “He is held in such high regard, and he has received so many ‘Top Doctor’ honors during his career. Dr. Balsama’s focus on the advancements in surgery, including robotics and new techniques, will provide even more breadth to what we can offer our patients.”

With the disease of obesity increasing in prevalence and multiple new frontiers in treatment, Virtua continues to grow its service to meet the need. In 2023 alone, Virtua helped well over 700 people improve their health through bariatric surgery.

To learn more about bariatrics at Virtua, [click here](#).

Ballots Due Soon for Jersey Choice Top Doctors

New Jersey Monthly surveys the state’s physicians each year to determine its list of “Jersey Choice Top Doctors.” The survey was mailed recently by the magazine’s polling company, K. Dale Associates, to every doctor licensed in the state for at least five years. Mailed ballots must be postmarked by Feb. 14. Online voting will remain open through Feb. 25.

Any doctor who did not receive a ballot can contact K. Dale Associates at 973-310-7567. Or just vote online [here](#) by using your state license number.

The results of the survey will be published in the November 2024 issue of *New Jersey Monthly*. [Click here](#) to consult the 2023 list. To learn more about the methodology, [click here](#).

Time for Your Say in the Best Hospitals Ranking

Each year, *U.S. News and World Report* releases the results of an opinion survey highlighting the “Best Hospitals” in the nation. A vital component of these scores derives from surveying board-certified physicians who are registered as [Doximity](#) users, the online networking service for medical professionals. So, if you are a registered Doximity member, watch for an email sometime this month or next about the annual member survey. Even if you don’t receive the email, you can still vote by logging in to [Doximity](#) with your username and password.

We appreciate your help in recognizing the hard work and dedication our clinicians put into providing the highest level of care. Last year, Virtua hospitals were recognized as high performing in several categories by *U.S. News & World Report*.

If you are looking to establish your Doximity profile, just follow the instructions [here](#). Certain profile data is viewable via [USNews.com](#) through its [Doctors tab](#) (within the Health tab) and used by patients to find care, so it is always good to keep your profile up to date.

Virtua to Announce Partnership with care.ai for Reimagined Inpatient Care

Virtua will soon announce an exciting and comprehensive partnership with care.ai, a Florida-based health care technology company. In the months and years ahead, Virtua's hospitals will install and implement a variety of care.ai products that aim to enhance patient care and empower clinical teams. A pilot program is currently underway on a med-surg unit at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital.

Care.ai specializes in creating "smart care" spaces that use cameras, sensors, and other technologies to inform providers and help keep patients safe. For instance, ambient monitoring equipment can be used to prevent potential falls and avoid pressure injuries.

"Just as smart speakers have become commonplace in people's homes, we are developing plans to equip our hospital rooms with the latest innovations," said Tarun Kapoor, MD, chief digital transformation officer for Virtua. "By providing our care teams with additional tools and resources, we anticipate a better experience for colleagues and patients alike."

Look for more information about this partnership in the weeks ahead.

Virtua Is "All In" on Excellence

Thank you for being *All In on Excellence*! This week, we consider moving "Forward Together" with the tip, "Phrases Not to Say."

This tip gives colleagues the opportunity to reflect on choosing positive and encouraging words that indicate that the team is working together for the patient's best interests despite challenges that may arise.

Click to [view the tip](#).

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:

"Have been a patient for a few years. I feel I am getting the best care possible. He and the staff are wonderful." (Rohit Malik, MD)

"I was a new patient. My experience with her was very positive! She took the time to listen to what I had to say without judgement and provided compassionate, careful recommendations. I felt heard and supported and look forward to future visits." (Sandi McKay, APN)

"I received the best care to help me get better and back home ASAP." (Kimberly Stawarz, MD)

“He is excellent. I just went to him for the first time. He was referred by a friend who speaks highly of him. He is thorough and explains everything in detail. I would recommend him to anyone looking for a cardiologist.” (Robert Barrucco, DO)

‘She is, without a doubt, the best renal specialist. Although it had been a while between visits, she knew every detail about my medical history. She was completely professional, friendly and put me at ease. She was patient and thoroughly answered every question. Other staff at check-in and check-out were friendly and efficient. This office deserves the highest rating. Sincere thanks to everyone there.’ (Savita Butani, MD)

Virtua in the News

Virtua Creates Advanced Heart Failure Center

Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital has opened an Advanced Heart Failure Center to enhance access to high-level cardiology services. The new center is credentialed as a Ventricular Assist Device (VAD) Facility—a next step in the evolution of Virtua’s advanced heart failure service. Virtua now has a total of five community-based heart failure offices. “Our goal is to help patients with heart failure live their healthiest possible life,” said Dr. Tolulope Agunbiade, medical director of Virtua’s Advanced Heart Failure Program. Read in [Philadelphia Business Journal](#).

Virtua-Rowan Partnership Already Enhancing Medical Education

The leaders of Virtua and Rowan University recently discussed the progress of the Virtua Health College of Medicine & Life Sciences of Rowan University since its inception two years ago. Virtua President and CEO Dennis W. Pullin, FACHE, and Rowan President Ali Houshmand, PhD, explained how the partnership is addressing the physician shortage, health care access and equity, and creating opportunities for scientific research that directly improves patient care. Read in [ROI-NJ](#).

Virtua Lauded for Award-Winning Hospitals

A statewide business publication highlighted Virtua among several New Jersey health systems that have earned major awards and accolades. “It is an honor to be recognized as a sought-after and nurturing place to work,” said Rhonda Jordan, EVP and chief human resources officer. “Caring for the community is all about making meaningful connections and building trust.” Read in [New Jersey Business Magazine](#).

Virtua Launches New Security Measures, Promotes Gun Safety

Virtua is improving the safety of its patients, visitors, and staff through several initiatives. The organization recently installed leading-edge weapons-screening technology at its hospitals and other sites. It has also joined other area health systems to promote gun safety, noted Gregory Pease, VP of security and outpatient services. Read in the [Courier-Post](#) or [Burlington County Times](#).

Physician Discusses King Charles’s Cancer Diagnosis

Stuart Diamond, MD, a Virtua-affiliated urologist, commented on the possible forms of cancer that may be affecting England's King Charles III. Watch on [CBS 3](#).

Industry Publication Spotlights Virtua Colleague

OR Today magazine profiled Gina Garozzo-Jones, director of sterile processing at Virtua Voorhees Hospital. She discusses her career journey, and notes that sterile processing is becoming more widely recognized for its importance. "Knowing that everything we touch touches somebody's life, and being in this field, you really are the unsung heroes of the hospital," she said. Read in [OR Today](#).

New Members Join Virtua Foundation Board

Three South Jersey professionals have joined the Virtua Health Foundation Board of Trustees, which oversees the organization's philanthropic activities to help build healthy communities and ensure everyone's access to care. The new members are Lori Lombardo, Brian Lynn, and Michael Saccomanno. Read in [ROI-NJ](#).

Mark Your Calendar: Virtua Bioethics Symposium to Take Place Feb. 29

Virtua's inaugural Bioethics Symposium, an interprofessional educational activity, will take place Thursday, Feb. 29 virtually from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

"The bioethics symposium planning committee is so excited to bring this educational opportunity to our colleagues," said Shannon Stillwell, MSN, RN, NE-BC, chair of the Virtua Bioethics Committee. "We were very intentional in our planning to educate on topics that our colleagues want to learn more about, with a focus on both current themes in our daily care, as well as newly emerging bioethical topics that will impact the way we care for our patients in the future."

The agenda will focus on difficult care decision making, the difference between Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) and advance directives, the challenges the LGBTQ+ community faces when seeking medical care, and how to identify moral distress in yourself and colleagues so our caretakers can take better care of themselves. Topics will also delve into the Medical Aid and Dying Act and some of the ethical concerns related to artificial intelligence.

The event will wrap up with a multidisciplinary panel that will discuss several case studies related to the day's learnings and shed light on some different perspectives.

"We really hope our teams take advantage of this great learning opportunity. It will only enhance their knowledge, comfort, and care during these challenging situations," said Stillwell.

For a full agenda, as well as details on accreditation and registration, [click this flyer](#).

WE Support Information Session

Prioritizing your emotional well-being can be challenging at times with work and life stressors, but [WE Support](#) is here to help. We are currently available to the following career networks: physician, clinician, nursing, and patient logistics. We are excited to launch our fifth network, allied health, later this month.

As a part of our ongoing rollout of peer support across all Virtua career networks, we held a *WE Support* 30-minute Q&A session. In the event you were unable to attend, click to [view the recording](#).

Topics covered:

- How to use *WE Support* as a tool for colleague well-being
- Step-by-step instructions of the *WE Support* connection process
- How to access *WE Support* and how to become a peer supporter

[Here for Good: Inside Edition Features Nurse With the Commitment of Compassion](#)

Ann Marie Porter Williams, RN, of Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, has a simple yet powerful rule: if you have three meals, share one. This commitment to helping those in need motivated her to pursue a career in nursing and care for those in her community, particularly individuals facing homelessness.

Check out [this episode of "Here for Good: Inside Edition"](#) with Dennis Pullin, where Ann Marie opens up about her personal journey, notably her experience of having twins. This experience inspired her to write "Welcome Rainbow Baby Logbook," which led to a whole series of logbooks and journals for new moms.

[IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All](#)

In this week's reflection of Black History Month, we spotlight *African Americans in the Arts*. Black and African American contributions to the arts have been a cornerstone of American culture, spanning fashion, literature, culinary arts, film, and music. From the Harlem Renaissance to Afrofuturism, there's a wealth of heritage to celebrate and honor.

We encourage you to participate in events hosted by the [African American Museum in Philadelphia](#), including a film spotlighting Black astronauts and their journey toward social justice, as well as a collaboration with the Philadelphia Ballet to pay tribute to Alvin Ailey, a legendary dancer and choreographer. These events offer an opportunity to learn more about the profound impact African American artists have had on our society.

Additionally, [Lunar New Year](#), which falls on **Feb. 10**, is a major celebration for Asians around the world, marking the advent of spring and the beginning of the lunar calendar. This holiday is linked to the zodiac, with each year being represented by a specific animal. This year, the Lunar New Year is symbolized by the dragon, an emblem of power, strength, and good fortune.

Furthermore, Virtua proudly supports its Colleague Community, [VirtuAsia](#), designed for colleagues of Asian diasporic heritage. VirtuAsia's mission states: "We are committed to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community by raising awareness of Asia's diverse cultures, supporting

professional and personal growth to nurture advancement opportunities, and bringing the voice of our external AAPI community into the organization.”