

## Clinician Update

January 30, 2025



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## Introducing MyStory, a New Feature on Epic

Virtua is adding a new feature to Epic called MyStory. Created by NRC Health, MyStory is designed to enhance patient care and drive loyalty by helping clinicians understand what matters most to our patients as people. Here is how it works:

Starting soon, patients can log into MyChart and select MyStory from the main menu. This will guide them through a series of prompts about their joys, pressures, goals, and more. Patients can update their responses at any time.

Clinicians can then access this information as part of the patient's medical record on Epic. They can quickly peruse what the patient has shared and discuss it during their next encounter.

Research shows that providers who use MyStory have better patient interactions that do not require additional time.

Rick Levine, MD, has piloted MyStory at two primary care practices. He says, "The information patients have shared via MyStory gives me greater insights into who they are—their personality, their preferences, and the factors that shape their lives. All of this helps me facilitate conversations that are specific to the individual and establish greater trust."

Access to MyStory will roll out to all primary care practices this week. Primary care providers will see the MyChart field added to patients' medical records on Epic. In the weeks ahead, access to MyStory will expand to specialty care practices and the hospitals.

Patients will learn about MyStory through MyChart appointment reminders, dedicated emails, collateral materials, and the Virtua website.

For more information, including FAQs and samples, visit the [Human Experience Resource Center](#) on the Colleague Corner and look under the header “Human Experience Training.”

## Winter Weather Intensifies Emergency Blood Shortage

National Blood Donor Month is coming to an end, and parts of New Jersey, particularly in the north, are grappling with a severe blood shortage. That is why [New Jersey Blood Services declared a regional blood emergency](#), citing a 30% decline in donations in recent weeks.

Nationally, the American Red Cross continues to experience [an emergency blood shortage](#) as severe winter weather has further impacted the ability to rebuild the blood supply. Blood and platelet donors are urged to give now to help ensure lifesaving medical procedures are not delayed.

“As for Virtua, our blood supplies are currently sufficient,” said Kimberly Frymire, MBA, SBB, corporate blood bank manager. “But as is the case in the region, we are working through a shortage of platelets and Rh-negative red cell supplies.”

The good news is that donor appointments are strong in the weeks ahead, and hopefully the inventory will rebound and stabilize. “That said, it is always good to promote local blood drives,” said Frymire. “Blood donors are life savers.”

Share the word. To find a nearby blood drive, click [here](#).

## Redefine-HF Trial

Virtua Research periodically shares trials for your consideration. The Redefine-HF trial is a randomized trial to determine the efficacy and safety of finerenone on morbidity and mortality among heart failure patients with a left ventricular ejection fraction greater than or equal to 40% and are hospitalized due to an episode of acute decompensated heart failure. Establishing that finerenone can provide an early reduction in the risk of HF events and CV death among patients with acute HFp/mrEF would significantly change clinical practice as this remains an unmet clinical need. Dr. Tolulope Agunbiade, medical director of the Virtua Advanced Heart Failure program, is the principal investigator for this trial.

Here are just a few of the inclusion/exclusion criteria:

**Inclusion:** Current hospitalization or recently discharged (within 10 days prior to screening) with the primary diagnosis of HF

**Exclusion:** Treatment with an MRA (finerenone, spironolactone, eplerenone, canrenone, esaxerenone) within 30 days prior to randomization; treatment with MRA should not be interrupted for the purpose of enrollment into the study

If you have a patient who meets the criteria above, please contact the Virtua Research team at [research@virtua.org](mailto:research@virtua.org) and a research coordinator will review their eligibility with you. Results will be published in a future *Clinician Update*.

## **Dr. Mazza and Dr. Yin Leading Research on Immune Response in Sepsis**

Virtua and Rowan researchers are collaborating on a project that may eventually benefit patients with sepsis. These patients have been shown to produce myeloid-derived suppressor cells (MDSCs), which are believed to contribute to immunosuppression during sepsis and can lead to secondary and/or persistent infection. This, in turn, contributes to increased morbidity and mortality in sepsis.

Kingsley Yin, PhD, associate professor of neuroscience and cell biology in the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine, and Emilio Mazza, MD, PhD, medical director of the ICU at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital and assistant professor, Institute for Regenerative Medicine and Transplantation, Rowan-Virtua School of Translational Biomedical Engineering and Sciences, have collaborated as part of a translational research project looking at the effects of specialized pro-resolving mediators (SPMs) on immune cell function. SPMs modulate the actions of all immune cells of myeloid lineage, such as neutrophils, monocytes, and lymphocytes. Drs. Yin and Mazza have hypothesized that one such SPM, resolvin D2 (RvD2), can modulate the actions of MDSCs and monocytes/macrophages to reduce immunosuppression in humans with sepsis.

The study will be conducted at Virtua Mount Holly and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes hospitals. Blood will be obtained from patients  $\geq 18$  years old diagnosed with sepsis within one to three days of enrollment into the trial. The blood will be taken to Dr. Yin's lab, where he will identify MDSCs and then treat the MDSCs with RvD2 versus saline placebo. The cells will then be exposed to lipopolysaccharide mimicking bacteria and the cytokine response assessed. The results of this collaborative research project will allow for a better understanding

of the immune response in sepsis and explore potential therapies that could modify that response.

## All In on Excellence 2025

This week, we spotlight an important aspect of our safety culture and invite all colleagues to watch the tip, [Everyone Leading Safety at the Local Level: Culture-Making Local Leadership](#). This tip is part of a series featuring Lisa Ferraro, president of Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital and SVP of Virtua Health.

Lisa shares, "I was excited and honored by the opportunity to become a member of the Practicing Excellence faculty and present tips about a topic I care about deeply. The series I filmed is called 'Everyone Leading Safety,' and the overarching message is that a high-reliability organization requires each staff member to recognize how they can contribute to a culture of safety.

"Recording the videos was a new experience that took me out of my comfort zone, but I knew the payoff was there. Not only will these tips support our ongoing journey, but they will also help show other health systems that we are HRO-minded and committed to creating outstanding experiences for everybody, always. Thank you for watching!"

## Clinician Coaching Information Now Easily Accessible on Physician Tab in Clinician Corner

Virtua's Practicing Excellence clinician coaching program is about continuous learning, confidence-building, and empowerment. It is about creating safe spaces for growth—where colleagues can express concerns, seek support, and become even better versions of themselves. The certified coaches have developed communication, analytical, and relational skills that make them effective patient experience coaches.

Coaching is about always getting better. If you would welcome someone to talk to, to be a guiding two-way mirror to help get you closer to the clinician you want to be, don't hesitate to reach out to a certified clinician coach. **Under the physician tab on Colleague Corner, select [Clinician Coaching](#)**. Perhaps you might prefer advice from a non-clinician certified coach? That option is available as well. All the coaches are sincere and want to help. They are not here to judge, but to assist.

Virtua champions a "Culture of WE," emphasizing the importance of relationship-centered care that strengthens connections among clinicians, patients, and team members. Everybody. Always.

You can also email [PEClinicianCoaches@virtua.org](mailto:PEClinicianCoaches@virtua.org) with any questions. And, to learn more, [here is a video](#) by Virtua emergency medicine physician Douglas Stranges, DO, a certified Practicing Excellence clinician coach.

## 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:

“Dr. Moore gave me her attention and listened. I sincerely feel she cares about her patients based on how she treated me.” **(Rebecca Moore, DO)**

“Dr. Mabanta is a very good doctor. He is knowledgeable and very thorough. He makes me feel at home. I know that he looked over my records both times, and he knew exactly what was going on. I would highly recommend him to a family or friend.” **(Ricardo Mabanta, MD)**

“Very pleased with the excellent care I always receive from Dr. Jennifer LeComte. She is attentive, knowledgeable, a great listener, and shows a true concern about my well-being.” **(Jennifer LeComte, DO)**

“We truly feel that in Corinne, we have someone who treats not just us individually, but our whole family. And we are thrilled that she's able to take care of us.” **(Corinne Cummings, APN)**

“Dr. DeLeon is AMAZING! He is kind, caring, and just a wonderful human! The whole team there is so nice and professional! I love them all!” **(Miguel DeLeon, MD)**

## Meet Hand Surgeon Dr. Nathan Bodin

Wait until you hear what firsthand experience inspired this doctor to be a hand surgeon. It's a reason why he is so connected to his patients and helps them tackle their hand and upper extremity injuries. As a surgeon, former Boy Scout, and CrossFit enthusiast, [Nathan D. Bodin](#), MD, believes that eyes are the windows to the soul, but the hands give it expression. He is dedicated to educating patients about their treatment options, executing a plan of care, and helping his patients get better. To learn more about Dr. Bodin, view this [video](#).

# Virtua in the News

## Dr. Topiel Addresses the ‘Quad-demic’ of Viruses

Four viral illnesses are increasing emergency-department visits and hospital admissions in South Jersey and across the country. Martin Topiel, MD, chief infection control officer, discussed how to reduce risks from these diseases, which are especially dangerous for young children, older adults, and those who are immunocompromised. Read on [NJ.com](#).

## Dr. Khelil Is Profiled in National Publication

Jennifer Khelil, DO, Virtua’s new chief clinical officer, continues to gain attention for her innovative approaches and accomplishments. This HealthLeaders story focuses on how she’s growing Virtua’s residency programs, increasing access to care, and addressing physician burnout.

“Every state is facing a shortage of health care workers, so if we can select individuals from this geographic region and train them, and they stay in the state, that benefits everyone in New Jersey,” said Dr. Khelil.

Read her interview in [HealthLeaders](#) and more about her recent promotion in [ROI-NJ](#).

## Dr. Webner Discusses the Risk of Severe Falls

Virtua doctors are seeing more slip-and-fall injuries due to icy surfaces caused by freezing temperatures in recent weeks. David Webner, MD, a sports medicine physician with Virtua Reconstructive Orthopedics, discussed the dangers and how to avoid such injuries. Patient Carlyn Phucas, who was treated in Virtua’s Berlin ED, shared how she fell on unseen ice and broke her wrist. Watch on [CBS 3](#).

## Dr. Lamborne Comments on Maternal Health Awareness

As reported in [last week’s Clinician Update](#), Maternal Health Awareness Day, held on Jan. 23, brought awareness to the maternal mortality crisis in the United States, and what can be done about it. Nicole Lamborne, MD, Virtua’s vice president of clinical operations for women’s health, shares how Virtua has been at the forefront of developing systems to identify and treat conditions that can endanger a mother’s life. Read in [ROI-NJ](#) and [Gloucester City News](#).

## New Tools are Enabling ‘Smart’ Hospital Rooms

Virtua hospitals are modernizing patient rooms with cameras, sensors, and other high-tech tools to improve patient safety and colleague workflows. Through its partnership with health technology firm care.ai, Virtua is turning its standard inpatient rooms into "smart rooms." Michael Capriotti, Virtua's newly appointed president of advanced care operations and logistics and a senior vice president, discussed the transformative benefits of these advances for both patients and staff. Read in [Tech Target](#).

### **Medical Students Building Community Through Service**

Hundreds of students from the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine are making a difference in people's lives. These aspiring doctors provide a wide range of support, including both health care and various volunteer services in the community. At the same time, these activities teach the students important lessons that prepare them to become better doctors.

Community service "reminds us that, as physicians, our core purpose is service to patients—not the other way around," said Richard Jermyn, DO, dean of Rowan-Virtua SOM. "It allows students to work through their preconceptions in a really healthy way." Read in [Rowan Today](#).

## **Putting Consumer Voices at the Forefront of Health Care**

Virtua partner NRC Health recently published a white paper, "Consumer Voices at the Forefront: Virtua Health's Strategy for Success." The white paper highlighted Virtua's innovative use of the Voice.Activated panel. This program, powered by NRC Health's suite of survey tools and data interpretation, leverages the insights of 45,000 diverse members to drive key initiatives.

Key achievements from consumer insights included:

- Development of a dedicated Crohn's and Colitis Center
- Improved staff responsiveness, enhancing patient care and aligning with CMS metrics
- Streamlined communication strategies that improved workforce engagement and reduced burnout

By actively involving consumers in the decision-making process, Virtua improves various aspects of patient care and organizational operations. [Click to view "Consumer Voices at the Forefront: Virtua Health's Strategy for Success."](#)

## Lunch and Learn on Advancing Heart Function, Feb. 19

This upcoming informational session, entitled “Advancing Heart Function, One Pump at a Time,” is a great way to celebrate Heart Month and an opportunity to learn the latest in advanced heart failure therapies.

Meet the advanced heart failure and LVAD team and learn who should be considered for advanced heart failure therapies. Learn how a left ventricular assist device (LVAD) functions. And experience a day in the life of an LVAD patient.

You are welcome to join in person in the Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Physicians Conference Room where boxed lunches will be provided, or via [Teams](#).

[Here is a printable flyer](#) for the event. For more information, please call Theresa Rowe-Ruffin, director of Heart Failure Services at 856-952-1056 or e-mail [troweruf@virtua.org](mailto:troweruf@virtua.org).

## IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

February is [Black History Month](#), a time to celebrate the achievements and contributions of African Americans throughout history. This year’s theme, *African Americans and Labor*, focuses on key moments and events that highlight the experiences of Black and African American workers. Throughout the month, we'll be sharing weekly spotlights on labor, nonprofit organizations, and Black and African Americans in health care.

The **Black and African American Colleague Community (BAACC)** is a Virtua employee resource group. Their mission is to “promote an environment of awareness, education, mentorship, inclusion, and respect throughout our Virtua community and beyond... and offer a resource and a safe space to cultivate success for our Black and African American colleagues.” To join or learn more, contact the BAACC at: [BAACC@virtua.org](mailto:BAACC@virtua.org)

Additionally, **Feb 3** is [Four Chaplains Day](#), annually honoring four military chaplains who heroically sacrificed their lives to save others during World War II. Congress created the Special Medal for Heroism to acknowledge their courage in 1961. [Learn more](#) about who they were and how they exemplified humanitarianism.





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