

Clinician Update

January 4, 2024

Chief Clinical Officer Addresses New Masking Requirements at Virtua

*From the desk of Reginald Blaber, MD, FACC, MBA
Executive VP/Chief Clinical Officer*

Dear colleagues:

First of all, I would like to wish all of you a happy and healthy New Year. I am writing you as a follow up to my December 20 communication about the so-called “triple-demic,” and the increasing strain that the Covid-19, RSV and influenza viruses are putting on our offices, EDs and hospitals coming out of the holidays. This is reflected in CDC reports of “high” influenza activity levels across New Jersey and [“very high” levels of influenza-like illnesses](#).

According to Becker’s Healthcare, [13 states – including ours – are feeling this seasonal influx most acutely](#). And many experts believe we have not yet reached the peak of this post-holiday surge. This week, our ED waiting rooms have been very crowded with patients and families, many with upper respiratory infections, creating an environment where any virus can easily spread to others.

In support of maintaining a safe environment for our patients and colleagues, we are incrementally increasing our efforts to limit the spread of any virus. In that regard, please take note of the following protocols, effective immediately:

1. All hospital patients are strongly encouraged to wear a face mask in hallways and public areas and when interacting with or in close proximity to others. Visitors are likewise strongly encouraged to wear a face mask at all times.
2. All persons in the emergency department are required to wear a face mask (if medically able) during their stay, whether they are seeking care or accompanying someone else. This requirement includes lobbies, waiting areas, patient rooms, etc.
3. Visitation to the adult emergency departments is limited to [one companion per patient](#). Limited exceptions can be granted by the care team in specific instances.

As always, please thoroughly and intentionally wash your hands before and after each patient encounter.

Thank you for your dedication to serving our community through this surge. We will continue to follow this closely and keep you as informed as possible in the weeks to come.

Editors’ Note: As a reminder, in a memo issued by Dr. Blaber on Dec. 20, 2023, Virtua has reinstated masking for all Virtua colleagues during patient encounters and in high-volume closed spaces like break rooms and meeting rooms.

Multi-Specialty Suite Now Open in Moorestown

Patients can now see experts from Virtua Gastroenterology, Virtua Colorectal Surgery, Virtua Surgical Group, and the new Virtua Crohn's & Colitis Center all in one convenient location at the Virtua Health and Wellness Center - Moorestown. This newly configured location makes it more convenient for patients to connect to multiple specialists in one place and creates a more collaborative experience for the clinical teams.

Advancements Continue in 2024 in Pulmonary Care at Virtua

After a momentous year in interventional pulmonology that saw the growing utilization of robotic bronchoscopy in early cancer diagnosis and lung-sparing surgery, Virtua Marlton Hospital is now even more equipped to serve patients with severe COPD/emphysema. These individuals often suffer from hyperinflation of their lungs where air becomes trapped, leading to severe shortness of breath. Virtua Marlton is now a Pulmonx Zephyr® regional treatment and assessment center and is able to offer advanced endobronchial implantable bronchial valves to improve breathing and quality of life.

The minimally invasive procedure reduces lung hyperinflation by allowing trapped air to escape and prevents new air from entering the diseased lobe. This allows the healthier parts of the lung to function better and results in patients being able to breathe more easily and experience less shortness of breath.

"It's a minimally invasive procedure that is completed in under an hour," said pulmonologist Eric Szejman, MD, vice president of clinical operations for the Virtua Medical Group. "The valves are placed by bronchoscopy, which requires no incisions or cutting, so the benefits are achieved without many of the risks of traditional surgical options."

"This procedure is much safer both morbidity- and mortality-wise," added interventional pulmonologist Syed Riaz, MD. "By decreasing the air trapping and thus improving the diaphragm function, it can help patients with both heterogeneous and homogeneous emphysema."

To learn more about the procedure, [click here](#). To read about last year's advancements at Virtua in interventional pulmonology, [click here](#).

Virtua Granted IAC Reccreditation in Vein and Vascular Expertise

Virtua Vein and Vascular Experts –Voorhees and Virtua Surgical Group – Hainesport have received a three-year reccreditation by the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC) in the area of Superficial Venous Treatment and Management.

As a comprehensive vascular program, Virtua treats the full range of venous and vascular disorders, from varicose and spider veins to arterial disorders to life-threatening blood clots. The accreditation reaffirms our attention to the best in vein treatment and management.

To learn more about Virtua Vein and Vascular Experts – Voorhees, [click here](#), and for Virtua Surgical Group – Hainesport, [click here](#).

Virtua Nephrologist Co-Authors Study on Rare Anti-GBM Disease

Anti-Glomerular Basement Membrane Nephritis and Membranous Nephropathy, also known as Anti-GBM disease, is an autoimmune disorder. It occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys healthy body tissue, particularly the lungs and kidneys. Virtua nephrologist Brett Rosenthal, DO, recently co-published a study researching the rare disorder.

The report is entitled “[The Characteristics of Concurrent Anti-Glomerular Basement Membrane Nephritis and Membranous Nephropathy](#)” and details the clinicopathologic characteristics and outcomes of 28 patients with this dual glomerulopathy diagnosed at a large nephropathology laboratory over a 23-year period.

“Anti-GBM diseases can involve quickly worsening kidney failure and lung disease,” said Dr. Rosenthal. “People with this syndrome develop substances that attack collagen in the tiny air sacs in the lungs and the filtering units (glomeruli) of the kidneys. It can be fatal if not quickly diagnosed and treated.”

While the association of Anti-GBM disease, also known as Goodpasture’s disease, with membranous nephropathy has been well documented, more research such as what Dr. Rosenthal and his colleagues have provided is needed. To view the published report, [click here](#).

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:

“A true 10! So wonderful to feel you are getting the actual care, information, and access needed! Very confidently and highly recommend this provider!” (Sheila Kaufman, CNM)

“He and the entire staff are the greatest. He is very caring and makes me feel comfortable at every visit. He is a wonderful doctor.” (Jayesh Khatiwala, MD)

“Could not be more impressed.” (Elizabeth Kusturiss, NP)

“He provides very thorough care and takes the time to discuss all questions. Follow-up plans are very well thought out. The staff is also very friendly and thorough.” (Angel Rodis, MD)

“She is just wonderful, she makes it happen. The best bedside manner that I have ever been in the presence of. She has been there for me and had gone out of her way to make sure I was OK. I love my doctor.” (Denne Thomas-Patterson, MD)

Virtua in the News

Virtua Welcomes Rare New Year's Babies: Twins Born in Different Years

A special set of twins arrived at Virtua Voorhees Hospital over the New Year's holiday. The baby boys were born on different days, months, and years! Little Ezra entered the world at 11:48 p.m. on Dec. 31, followed by brother Ezekiel at 12:28 a.m. on Jan. 1.

"I was still pushing when everyone's doing the countdown and we all just said, 'Happy New Year' in the middle of me trying to push out Baby B," said mom Eve Humphrey.

Read and watch here: [GoodMorningAmerica.com](https://www.goodmorningamerica.com), [Today.com](https://www.today.com), [CBS 3](https://www.cbs3.com), [6 ABC](https://www.6abc.com), [NBC 10](https://www.nbc10.com), [Fox 29](https://www.fox29.com), [Telemundo 62](https://www.telemundo62.com), [KYW Newsradio](https://www.kyw.com), [Courier-Post](https://www.courier-post.com), [NJ.com](https://www.nj.com), [Philadelphia Inquirer](https://www.phillyinquirer.com), [Philly Voice](https://www.phillyvoice.com), [ROI-NJ](https://www.roi-nj.com), and [WHYY](https://www.whyy.com).

Virtua Physician Discusses Respiratory Illnesses Surging in Area

Like much of the country, South Jersey is experiencing a spike in flu, COVID-19, and RSV cases—and numbers will likely rise over the next few weeks. Charles Nolte, DO, medical director of the Virtua Voorhees emergency department, discussed how the public can protect themselves.

Watch on [CBS 3](https://www.cbs3.com), [6 ABC](https://www.6abc.com), and Dr. Nolte's [extended CBS 3 interview](#).

Virtua's Chief Marketing Officer Among 60 Honored Nationwide

A prominent industry publication has recognized Virtua's Chrisie Scott among "60 hospital and health system chief marketing officers to know."

She specializes in using data on consumer preferences to help drive Virtua's strategic priorities and marketing. Chrisie "has elevated Virtua's brand, redefining marketing and its use as a tool to elevate the experiences of everyone on the team," the story notes.

Read in [Becker's Hospital Review](#).

Virtua Is "All In" on Excellence: Halfway Point!

Thank you for being *All In on Excellence*. This week, designated as a catch-up week, is an opportunity to watch any tips in the *All In on Excellence* program you may have missed. You can also re-watch tips to help ensure the content and the teachings take hold. [View this handy roadmap](#) to see exactly where we are on this journey. As you can see, we have completed the first two chapters of this program. Next week, we will start the third chapter, On Purpose, which will continue through January.

We encourage you to continue your commitment to personal and professional growth by immersing yourself in these resources and sharing your experiences. Click to find valuable tips from the [Patient Experience](#) program and the All In on Excellence [I Belong Here](#) and [Everyone Matters](#) chapters. Thank you for being part of a team and an organization that is dedicated to continuous improvement and

excellence. Let's embrace this opportunity to grow together and make a meaningful impact in our roles and lives.

Additionally, patient volume across Virtua is exceptionally high, which can result in stressful situations and challenging moments. Here are some Practicing Excellence tips that speak to these scenarios:

- [Personal Care and Recovery Series](#)
- [Lifting the Emotional Exhaustion Series](#)
- [Managing Difficult Encounters Series](#)
- [When Things Go Wrong Series](#)

As of now, more than 10,200 colleagues have earned certification for the program—and that number continues to grow.

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

Strong and Steady Leadership:

CFO Bob Segin discusses finance and more with Dennis Pullin

With a career at Virtua that spans nearly four decades, Bob Segin knows all about our health system's history and has keen insights into our shared future. Recently, our CFO joined CEO Dennis Pullin for the "Here for Good: Inside Edition" podcast, and the pair chatted about industry trends and ways for Virtua to stand apart in a competitive field.

Learn about Bob's proudest moments and more in this [highly enjoyable interview](#).

Identifying Patients for Advanced Heart Failure Therapy

Upcoming Event: Friday, Jan. 19

An increasing number of people are living with heart failure. Some who develop more advanced/end-stage heart failure may be eligible for additional life-prolonging therapies. It can be challenging for clinicians to identify patients for advanced heart failure therapy, but Virtua is offering an education session on the latest advancements in heart failure.

"When patients come to us, our goal is to optimize their medical therapy, ensuring that they are on appropriate guideline-directed medical therapy and to pursue any additional diagnostic or therapeutic interventions that can help improve their heart failure and improve their quality of life," said Tolulope Agunbiade, MD, director of Virtua's Advanced Heart Failure Program.

Join Dr. Agunbiade and Chun "Dan" Choi, MD, vice president of clinical operations for Virtua's Cardiovascular Service Line, for an informational session on advanced heart failure therapies.

Providers will gain an understanding of:

- Who should be considered for advanced heart failure therapies
- How a left ventricular assist device (LVAD) functions
- How an LVAD is implanted and the post-op care required
- A day in the life of an LVAD patient

When:

Friday, Jan. 19 at 12 p.m. ([Teams](#) or In-Person)

Physicians Conference Room

1600 Haddon Ave, Camden, NJ 08103

For an event flyer, [click here](#). For more information, contact Theresa Rowe-Ruffin, director of Heart Failure Services at troweruf@virtua.org or 856-886-6468.

Virtua Health Foundation Board Recognizes Dr. Sauerwein for 20 Years of Service

The Virtua Health Foundation Board of Trustees recently recognized Virtua cardiologist Anthony Sauerwein, MD, for his remarkable service as a trustee for the past 20 years. Board Chair Damien M. Ghee presented Dr. Sauerwein with a beautiful, framed certificate at his last board meeting as a trustee. During Dr. Sauerwein's tenure as a Virtua Health Foundation trustee, and before that as a trustee of the Memorial Hospital Burlington County Foundation, Virtua Health has raised more than \$100 million in philanthropic support to help build a healthier South Jersey. Dr. Sauerwein will continue to be involved with the foundation's mission as a member of the Physicians Philanthropy Council. Virtua Health Foundation is grateful for Dr. Sauerwein's leadership and commitment to our patients and community!

IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

[World Braille Day](#) is celebrated each year on Jan. 4. Designated in 2019, the birth of Louis Braille is celebrated on this date for advancing accessibility and new possibilities to those who are blind or have low vision.

Also, did you know that Christmas hasn't ended for many around the world? Whether taking part in traditions such as plunging into a cold river or enjoying Rosca de Reyes (the King's Bread), various communities celebrate [3 King's Day or El Dia de los Reyes](#) on Jan. 6.

¡HOLA! – Virtua's Newest Colleague Community

Join us in welcoming our newest Colleague Community—the ¡HOLA! Colleague Community. The acronym reflects: Heritage, Our Unity, Leadership, and Advancement of Hispanic and Latin American colleagues.

Their mission is “to promote an environment of awareness, education, mentorship, inclusion, and respect throughout our Virtua community and beyond. Virtua is the health care system and employer of choice to support growing Hispanic and Latin communities in our region. ¡HOLA! is a resource and a safe space to cultivate success for our Hispanic and Latin colleagues.”

¡HOLA! welcomes interested colleagues to join as they plan for 2024. For details or to join, email HOLA@Virtua.org.

To join or learn more about Virtua’s Colleague Communities, visit the [Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All \(IDEA\) page](#) on the Colleague Corner.