

Clinician Update January 9, 2025

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Dr. Khelil Promoted to Chief Clinical Officer

Virtua President and CEO Dennis Pullin today announced the promotion of Jennifer Khelil, DO, to the position of executive vice president and chief clinical officer of Virtua Health. If you missed it, below is the system wide email message.

Colleagues,

I am pleased to announce the promotion of Dr. Jennifer Khelil to the position of executive vice president and chief clinical officer of Virtua Health.

Dr. Khelil has been a valuable member of Virtua's leadership team, serving as senior vice president and chief medical officer since 2019 and prior as vice president of medical affairs. In her expanded role, Dr. Khelil will continue to collaborate with our leadership teams to provide clinical oversight across the organization, focusing on high reliability, quality and safety, and patient outcomes. She will also provide executive oversight for nursing, physician services, and medical affairs.

As in the past, Dr. Khelil will take an active role in developing our clinical team and enhancing key service areas. She will also strengthen our partnership with Rowan University and drive the remarkable growth of our graduate and undergraduate medical education programs.

Her empathy and problem-solving abilities will be crucial in tackling some of the most significant challenges in our industry, such as staff burnout, workforce shortages, and ensuring compassionate, personalized care in an increasingly digital world. Her commitment to creating exceptional experiences for both providers and patients will play a pivotal role in shaping our collective future.

Jen holds a medical degree from the former University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey School of Osteopathic Medicine -- which today is fittingly the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine. She also has a Master of Business Administration from Quinnipiac University. She is a graduate of the Health Management Academy's Physician Leadership Program and completed a two-year fellowship organized by the Academy and GE Healthcare. Prior to Virtua, she was medical director of two South Jersey organizations and a practicing physician in pulmonary and sleep medicine.

Please join me in congratulating Jen on this well-earned promotion.

Dennis

Masking for All Patient Encounters Now in Effect

In case you missed it, Jennifer Khelil, DO, EVP and chief clinical officer, recently distributed a memo regarding masking for all patient encounters in acute care settings and ambulatory locations. This is due to the increasing activity of respiratory illnesses in New Jersey.

[Click to view the message.](#)

Virtua Successfully Achieves Recertification for LVADs

Congratulations to Virtua’s Advanced Heart Failure team, led by medical director Tolulope Agunbiade, MD, at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital for this week receiving recertification by the DNV for the implantation of left ventricular assist devices (LVADs). This recertification highlights the continued excellence and commitment to quality care within the program. In just seven months of operation in 2024, cardiothoracic surgeons at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital successfully performed five LVAD implants.

Another Record Year for Transplant Volume

For the fourth consecutive year, Virtua Advanced Transplant & Organ Health has performed a record number of transplants. There were 139 transplants in 2024 at Virtua , 25 more than 2023.

“With advanced care options like our progressive patient and organ selection criteria to get patients transplanted sooner, and virtual organ crossmatching for faster donor organ matching, we continue to improve access to advanced organ care for the people of South Jersey and beyond,” said Janine Vallen, RN, MSN, CCTN, APN-C, assistant vice president of Transplant Services. “We are so grateful to be the trusted destination for patients in our community in need of kidney, liver, and pancreas transplantation and other life-saving organ health treatment.”

To refer a patient, please contact transplant liaison Natalie Frament at 215-528-1195. Patients can also visit go.virtua.org/VATOH to request a consultation directly.

Virtua Welcomed 8,944 Births in 2024

This past year proved to be another banner one for births at Virtua’s hospitals, especially in consideration of the national declining trend. While 2024 numbers are not yet known nationally, births in the U.S. have dropped by 17% since 2007. With 6,485 births at Virtua Voorhees, 1,820 at Virtua Mount Holly, and 639 at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes, for a total of 8,944, that is 14 above what was forecasted for the year and just 33 less than last year.

“This says much about the community’s trust in us,” said Nicole Lamborne, MD, MBA, FACOG, VP of clinical operations for Women’s and Children’s Services. “Each delivery is precious, and we are honored

to provide the expertise of our medical staff and the effective protocols to assure successful outcomes and exceptional birth experiences for parents and their newborns.”

As just recently reported in [Clinician Update](#), Virtua’s three hospitals with maternity divisions are once again designated as “high performing” on *U.S. News & World Report’s* 2025 list of “Best Hospitals for Maternity Care.” In addition, Virtua Mount Holly and Virtua Voorhees hospitals join Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes with their redesignation as Baby-Friendly birth facilities by Baby-Friendly USA, Inc.

Virtua Utilizing Risk Screening Tool in Surgical Prehabilitation

At Virtua, the Risk Analysis Index (RAI) is now a standard part of all pre-op visits for non-emergency surgery. The RAI is administered at all new patient VMG surgical visits (except bariatrics), electronically in MyChart as part of the visit check-in or on paper the day of the visit. It is a questionnaire that has been shown to be an effective method of risk-stratifying patients. By asking a strategic set of patient-focused questions, a risk score is generated, and that data provides critical information to the surgeon and patient prior to surgery.

“This provides invaluable insight toward pre-op decision making,” said Howard Winter, MD, vice president of surgical practice and outcomes. “Unlike previous screening that could be cumbersome, the RAI is an efficient way to screen patients for their surgical risk levels so that surgeons can order measures to minimize those risks.”

The RAI score is visible to the surgeon during the office visit via a BPA, which the surgeon must acknowledge to complete the visit in Epic. Answers to various questions on health history and lifestyle generate a numeric score. Scores over 37 have been validated over thousands of patients to correlate with at least doubling rates of postoperative mortality, complications, and readmissions. Thus, scores over 37 prompt the clinician to suggest additional orders, such as consultation of physical therapy, nutrition, and smoking cessation.

“It is anticipated that these prehabilitation measures, as well as standard pre-op medical optimization, will lead to better trackable post-op outcomes,” said Dr. Winter, a colon and rectal surgeon. “It is paramount we identify surgical patients who have an increased risk for post-op complications, readmissions, or even death. Our mission is to heal our community and get them back to their everyday lives. This step will help us in that task.”

Virtua Expands Surgical Services to Wilmington, DE

Virtua welcomes Delaware Surgical Group from Wilmington and providers [Joseph Belgrade, MD](#), [Michael Conway, MD](#), and [Eric Kalish, MD](#) to Virtua Medical Group. This practice provides general surgery procedures and operates at Virtua’s affiliated ambulatory surgery center, Limestone Surgery Center, also located in Wilmington.

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:

“Too bad I can only give him five stars, because he is a 10-star surgeon. I have had a few surgeries with Dr. Greenleaf over the past 10 years, and they were all very successful. I may have to have another surgery soon, and I wouldn't trust anyone else to do the job.” **(Robert Greenleaf, MD)**

“I wish I could give higher than five stars. Just really excellent care from check-in to end of appointment. She was just exactly what I was looking for in a new provider. She was kind, patient, so knowledgeable, and made sure to ask if I had questions over and over. I highly recommend her if you are like me and need a very gentle provider who really listens and cares. And, the office is also so clean and organized.” **(Jessica Burns, APN)**

“I was very impressed by the way all the nurses and Dr. Simona Necsutu sprang into action when my loved one suddenly got sick while we waited in the waiting room. They demonstrated extreme caring and outstanding knowledge! I am so very grateful to them. Now we have a better understanding of my loved one's health condition.” **(Simona Necsutu, MD)**

“The doctor was a joy. She was pleasant and she had a great sense of humor. And we knew she was very much in touch with everything that was important to us.” **(Adaora Okoli-Umeweni, MD)**

“Dr Spagnuolo is highly respected and trusted with our family's cardiology issues. He has no equal when it comes to his knowledge of my parents' case, with his skill and compassion. He is not only an amazing doctor, but also an amazing human being. He cares!” **(Vincent Spagnuolo, MD)**

Practicing Excellence Into the New Year

As we begin 2025, we continue to share Practicing Excellence tips to watch in preparation for the upcoming new program launch. We will share details next week.

In the meanwhile, this week's focus is on creating impactful first impressions. Click below to view the tip: [Creating First Impressions Tip #4: First Moments – New Patients](#)

Steven Santangelo, DO, assistant vice president of clinical operations with Virtua Medical Group, shares his insights:

“While this video focuses on outpatient care, its themes are universal. Making a strong first impression and recognizing each person as a unique individual are essential elements of outstanding patient experiences. Even simple gestures, like making eye contact, can have a big impact. Many of us begin the year with the goal of self-improvement or reinvention. With that in mind, I encourage everyone to begin 2025 extra mindful and intentional about creating a strong first impression.”

Virtua Enrolling Patients in a Clinical Study on Hypertension Management

Virtua continues to enroll patients in the SPYRAL AFFIRM Clinical Study, which evaluates the long-term safety, efficacy, and durability of the Medtronic Symplicity Spyral™ Renal Denervation System in patients with uncontrolled hypertension and associated medical conditions. Virtua [first introduced the Symplicity system](#) a year ago at Virtua Mount Holly Hospital in January 2024.

“Increasing awareness is key to tackling the issue of hypertension given it is preventable, detectable, and treatable,” said Virtua interventional cardiologist Kintur Sanghvi, MD, FACC, FSCCAI. “Virtua is pleased to provide the Symplicity blood pressure procedure to qualified patients and, starting now, to participate in the clinical study.”

To date, Dr. Sanghvi and his team have performed the procedure for more than a dozen patients, and recent patients have also been enrolled in the study. The SPYRAL AFFIRM Clinical Study will enroll up to 1,300 patients worldwide and will monitor the participants for three years.

Epic Now Provides Easier Access to Virtua Librarians

Medical librarians are now more accessible than ever as a resource for clinicians to find health information. You can reach Virtua librarians through Epic. Simply send a message to the Virtua-Librarian chat group or send a secure individual message to the librarians. They are always ready to research your requests.

Annaliese Cuneo covers Virtua Marlton, Virtua Mount Holly, and Virtua Voorhees hospitals. Helen-Ann Brown Epstein supports Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes residents and critical care. Sophia Kim covers Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes and Willingboro hospitals, and the Our Lady of Lourdes School of Nursing.

Virtua in the News

Dr. Matsinger Recognized as a Top COO

A leading industry publication has named John Matsinger, DO, to its list of “118 COOs to Know.” As the organization’s executive vice president and chief operating officer, Dr. Matsinger “has been instrumental in elevating Virtua’s care offerings, including award-winning programs in cancer care, cardiology, orthopedics and organ transplantation,” the periodical noted. He was also recognized for leading the growth of Virtua’s robotic surgery capabilities and development of Virtua’s highly successful Hospital at Home program, among other innovations. Read in [Becker’s Hospital Review](#).

Dr. Topiel Discusses Rise in Norovirus and Respiratory Illnesses

South Jersey is experiencing a surge in flu, COVID-19, RSV, and norovirus. New Jersey has elevated levels of these infections, according to recent reports. Martin Topiel, MD, chief infection officer, discussed the impact on hospitals and predicted that illness rates will continue to rise over the next several weeks. He was featured in two separate stories. Watch or read on CBS3 [here](#) and [here](#).

Winter Can Spur Seasonal Depression

With fewer daylight hours this time of year, many people experience a type of depression called seasonal affective disorder. Lynn Morgan, LCSW, a psychotherapist with Virtua Behavioral Health, explained the condition, which may affect up to one in five Americans. Read in [Central Jersey Local News](#).

Virtua Welcomes First Babies of 2025

Three beautiful newborns kicked off the new year with a sweet start, as the first babies delivered at Virtua hospitals on Jan. 1. That included Little Analy Ester Rivera, who arrived a minute after midnight. Watch on [NBC 10](#) and [Fox 29](#), and read in [The Courier-Post](#).

CME: Liver Disease and Transplantation, Jan. 28

The Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine will host a CME session entitled “[Liver Disease and Transplantation](#)” on **Tuesday, Jan. 28**, from 12:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. in the Physician Conference Room at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. The live activity is designated for *3.75 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. The speakers include Simona Rossi, MD; Ashraf Malek, MD; and Ely Sebastian, MD.

The target audience for this activity is physicians, physician assistants, advanced nurse practitioners, medical residents, medical fellows, and nurses.

To register, go to The Virtua Learning System (VLS) and search “Liver Disease and Transplantation.” For more information, click [here](#).

CME: Quarterly Weight Management Grand Rounds, Jan. 29

The CME session Quarterly Weight Management Grand Rounds will help participants define obesity as a chronic disease, review the medical risks associated with obesity, and discuss treatment options for obesity. The virtual event will take place on **Wednesday, Jan. 29**, from 7 to 8 a.m., and will feature speaker Susan Varevice-MacAndrew, DO, of the Virtua Complete Weight Management Program and diplomat of the American Board of Obesity Medicine. For more information, click [here](#) for a printable flyer. To join the event, click [here](#).

Clinician Feedback Sought for Improving Social Determinants of Health

The South Jersey Health Collaborative, of which Virtua is a member, is asking for your feedback in this 10-15 minute [Key Stakeholder Survey](#). The goal is to learn more about strengths, barriers, and opportunities for improving health and social determinants of health across South Jersey. Click [here](#) for the survey and thank you for your time and participation.

National Pharmacist Day, Jan. 12

National Pharmacist Day is Sunday, Jan. 12, set aside to annually recognize all pharmacists across the nation. We acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Virtua’s pharmacists not just on that day, but year-round. “I’m so very proud of our team,” said Patrick Ferguson, AVP of Pharmacy Services. “They each play a vital role in our patients’ recovery.” Thank you to all our pharmacists.

Meet Transplant Surgeon Dr. Nasser Youssef

When not climbing mountains or hiking with his family, Virtua Advanced Transplant & Organ Health’s Nasser Youssef, MD, specializes in providing his patients with life-saving organ transplants and procedures. With more than 30 years of medical experience, Dr. Youssef believes in providing high-quality care along with ample communication with patients and their families. To learn more about Dr. Youssef, [view this video](#).

Caring for Those Who Care

Nicole McNeal, director of well-being at Virtua, sat down with President and CEO Dennis Pullin to share her journey into workplace well-being. Witnessing the challenges and rewards of caregiving first-hand, she found her passion in supporting those who help others. At Virtua, Nicole fosters a culture of care, creating positive energy with initiatives like refuel rooms, peer support programs, and wellness events. Nicole credits her parents and her own role as a mother for inspiring her work and commitment to creating a supportive environment for our colleagues. [Click to view the video](#).

IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

Jan. 13 is [Korean American Day](#), celebrating the history and contributions of Korean American immigrants and their descendants.

[Women of Virtua Colleague Community Networking Event](#)

Jan. 15, 6 to 9 p.m.

Virtua Barry Brown Health Education Center, Voorhees

Celebrate the start of the new year with an exciting evening of free bingo, laughter, and networking. Learn about the WOV’s 2024 accomplishments and goals for 2025. Enjoy light refreshments and non-alcoholic beverages and win great prizes.

Respect + Allyship = Belonging with Dr. Randal Pinkett

Jan. 16, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Virtua Barry D. Brown Health Education Center, Voorhees

Brought to you by Virtua's Colleague Communities, this insightful session will focus on how respect and allyship are essential to building a strong sense of belonging and strengthening our Culture of WE.

Guest speaker Dr. Randal Pinkett, chairman and CEO of [BCT Partners](#) and a renowned diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) thought leader, will explore data-driven insights and practical strategies to cultivate respect through trust and understanding, actively champion others through allyship, and create an inclusive environment where everyone truly belongs—and we are Here for Good. Click [here for more information](#).

Click [here to register for the event](#).