

## **Clinician Update**

### **June 15, 2023**

#### **Virtua's COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement Lifted**

In line with recent changes to state and federal requirements regarding COVID-19 vaccines, Virtua is lifting its COVID-19 vaccination requirements for all colleagues, clinicians, and other health care personnel working in Virtua facilities, effective immediately.

On June 12, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signed Executive Order 322 lifting the COVID-19 vaccination requirement for employees in health care settings, which had required Virtua colleagues and health care personnel to be “up to date” on their vaccinations. The governor’s order aligns New Jersey with recent updates to federal requirements and reflects the different circumstances in our state now, as compared to the past few years.

The overwhelming majority of Virtua’s workforce is already up to date with their COVID vaccinations, which will continue to benefit our community and patients. COVID-19 vaccines have proven to be safe and effective, and Virtua will continue to encourage—but not require—all new and existing colleagues to remain up to date on their vaccinations.

Thank you to all of our colleagues for your steadfast compliance with the required mandates over the past few years. Vaccination has been a key public health tool to protect our health care workers, the community, and our patients.

#### **Welcome, Virtua Anesthesia Group**

Virtua Mount Holly Hospital, Virtua Willingboro Hospital, and Virtua Mount Holly Hospital – Ambulatory Surgery have welcomed Virtua Anesthesia Group. This group is comprised of clinicians who are now a part of Virtua Medical Group, as well as contracted practitioners from Morris Anesthesia Group. They hosted a warm welcome reception to mark this transition.

#### **Rowan Integration Go-Live Update**

As reported [here](#) last week, Rowan Medicine and Virtua reached a significant milestone in our partnership with the successful “Day One” of our Epic journey. The achievement marked an important step forward in our academic affiliation, as 130 Rowan Medicine clinicians officially became affiliates of Virtua Medical Group (VMG), which will provide greater access and continuity of care for the people of South Jersey.

Under the new aligned name, "Rowan Medicine, an Affiliate of Virtua Medical Group," Rowan Medicine clinicians are now part of a network that is comprised of more than 1,200 Virtua-employed and fellow affiliate providers.

With nearly two weeks of go-live complete in the electronic medical record launch at all Rowan Medicine locations, incredible progress has been made thus far. Daily calls, tickets, and escalations continue to decline. As such, the project leadership team will begin to taper some of the at-the-elbow support starting next week. Each practice will still have dedicated support, but the total numbers will be decreased in each area.

The "How-To" Help Desk will continue to operate for another week. Colleagues can call 856-355-1234 and select option 1, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Friday, June 23 for assistance with "how-to" questions or workflows. Remember that to open a ticket, please utilize the [Virtua Customer Portal](#) or call the Virtua IT Support Desk at the number above and wait through the prompts to get to Virtua IT support.

## Virtua's Education Programs Welcome New Residents

Virtua recently welcomed 75 new residents and fellows to our Graduate Medical Education (GME) programs. We now host over 125 learners in 12 programs, which is 50 more than last year. We also continue to provide core educational experiences for more than 70 students through our academic partner, Rowan Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine. This growth demonstrates our commitment to academics as we address the health care workforce of the region and the needs of our community.

Virtua's GME programs attract residents from diverse geographic locations, ranging from as close as Rowan University to as far as China, with others coming from medical schools across the country and around the world. The inclusion of residents from such varied backgrounds adds to the richness of our programs, promoting cultural diversity and fostering a global perspective in health care. The experiences and perspectives that these residents bring help to create a collaborative and inclusive learning environment.

"We take pride in the start of our new Internal Medicine and General Surgery programs, accredited by ACGME (Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education)," said Richard G. Paluzzi, MD, medical director of medical education and the designated institutional official at Virtua. "Our Internal Medicine program is welcoming a class of 18 first-year residents to a three-year program, and our General Surgery program welcomes an inaugural group of 15 residents distributed evenly across the first, second, and third years of a five-year program. We have also expanded our Psychiatry residency, and are in the process of merging two Family Medicine residencies, capitalizing on the strengths of two excellent programs in order to create one program that is even better."

Virtua's GME programs not only offer fellowship opportunities in Osteopathic Neuromusculoskeletal Medicine (ONMM), Geriatric Medicine, and Geriatric Psychiatry, but also host a fellowship in Cardiovascular Disease and has plans to expand its offerings in the future. "This year, we've seen dramatic growth in education across the health system with the addition of new GME programs, as well as undergraduate medical education," said Dr. Paluzzi.

If anyone wishes to learn more about our residencies or fellowship programs, we encourage you to reach out to the GME office at [graduatemedicaleducation@virtua.org](mailto:graduatemedicaleducation@virtua.org).

## Four Ambulatory Surgery Centers Join Virtua's Network of ASCs, Bringing Total to 39

Virtua's Network of Ambulatory Surgery Centers (ASCs) now includes Freehold Surgical Center, Pavonia Surgical Center, South Jersey Eye Physicians, and SurgiCenter of Vineland. The four new additions bring Virtua's family of partnered ASCs to 39 in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

"We are proud of this network, which includes all state-of-the-art health care facilities transforming the outpatient experience and providing the highest caliber care for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures and surgery," said Monte Goldstein, MD, chief medical officer of Virtua ASC Joint Ventures.

Virtua's ambulatory surgery centers are all state licensed, nationally accredited and Medicare certified, ensuring adherence to the highest quality and safety standards. *Newsweek* recently recognized 14 Virtua ASCs in the top 26 ASCs in New Jersey.

Click [here](#) to see a map of the ASCs in the Virtua network.

## Practicing Excellence at Virtua

Thank you for your commitment to Practicing Excellence and the *Patient Experience* journey. This week, we invite you to focus on the invaluable insights provided in the [Week 11 and 12 guides](#).

This week, teams will focus on one of several compelling topics based on their learning track. Topics include *Bringing Compassion, Practicing Self-Care, Building Team Trust, Creating Patient Confidence, and Team Communication and Recognition*.

To share your team's best practices and success, email [virtuainfo@virtua.org](mailto:virtuainfo@virtua.org). To access the weekly guides and additional resources, visit the [Practicing Excellence page](#) on the Colleague Corner.

## Quarterly Cardiology Grand Rounds, June 21

### The New HF Guidelines: What We All Need to Know

The next program in this virtual series will highlight the new heart failure guidelines we all need to know. It will take place on Wednesday, June 21 at 7 a.m., and will feature Sabra Lewsey, MD, MPH. Dr. Lewsey is a cardiologist specializing in heart failure and an assistant professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins Medicine. She completed her residency in internal medicine at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, where she also completed fellowships in cardiology, advanced heart failure, and transplant cardiology.

Virtua Health designated this live medical education activity for a maximum of 1.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™. [Go here to register](#). To learn more, [view the flyer](#). After June 21, be sure to mark your calendars for future sessions on September 20 and December 20.

## Proton Therapy, Interventional Pulmonology Featured in Recent *Today* Series

Our most recent issues of the *Today* physician education series center on the options and patient selection criteria used in the recently opened Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Proton Therapy Center. “Proton therapy is the most advanced form of radiation, and is particularly good for targeting tumors in hard-to-reach places near critical organs, or to re-irradiate treated tumors that have recurred,” said radiation oncologist Catherine Kim, MD, medical director of Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Radiation Oncology. [Click here to read the issue](#) and [here for further details and referral information](#).

[Interventional Pulmonology Today](#) reviews the use of robotic-assisted bronchoscopy for early lung cancer diagnosis, as well cryobiopsy for fibrotic lung disease. Both technologies are providing the opportunity for earlier intervention.

## *Here for Good: Inside Edition* Featuring Dr. Dan Choi

This week, Dan Choi, MD, VP of clinical operations and lead of the cardiovascular service line, sat down with President and CEO Dennis Pullin in the *Here for Good: Inside Edition* podcast, discussing the importance of establishing human connections with patients.

In an excerpt from the podcast, Dr. Choi says, “We perform very high risk, very complex procedures, and the tendency is to fixate on the procedure we are delivering. But we encourage everyone to take a step back and take a look at the person that’s in front of you—the patient, not as a potential diagnosis—and trying to figure what it is you are trying to do for that human being. Then you’ll figure out the right care, the right procedure that you are trying to deliver.”

Dr. Choi also shared an interesting personal detail about his pets—who are all named after iconic figures in 1990s hip hop!

Click to [view the podcast](#). To view all episodes of *Here for Good: Inside Edition*, visit the [Colleague Corner](#).

## Virtua **Speech Language Pathologist** Authors Two National Articles

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association recently published two articles written by Stefanie LaManna, MS, CCC-SLP, a speech language pathologist with Virtua’s rehabilitation services. [This article](#) centers on the topic of using the four domains of pediatric feeding disorders to guide assessment and treatment. [This article](#) reports on how new neonatal care standards support SLPs’ consistent presence in the NICU.

## VIRTUA IN THE NEWS

### Three Virtua Physicians Offer Health Tips for Wildfire Smoke

Virtua's Eric Szejman, MD, was one of South Jersey's first physicians to speak with local media about the recent dangers of poor air quality from wildfire smoke. A pulmonologist and VP of clinical operations, Dr. Szejman, along with fellow pulmonologist Andrew Schiff, MD, and Virtua Marlton Hospital director of emergency medicine Craig Turner, DO, spoke with a number of reporters to help educate and protect the public. Here's a sampling of their interviews: [CBS 3](#), [CBS 3 \(live\)](#), [NBC 10](#), [WHYY.org](#), [NJ.com](#), [Becker's Hospital Review](#), [Courier-Post](#); and [Burlington County Times](#). CBS 3 reported three separate stories with help from these dedicated doctors, who also appeared on 6 ABC and KYW Newsradio.

### Virtua Spotlighted for Outstanding Service to LGBTQ+ Community

As we celebrate the first anniversary of [Virtua Pride Primary Care](#), Virtua gained important recognition for our work with LGBTQ+ patients, staff, and allies. The *Philadelphia Business Journal* is featuring Virtua among its ten "Business of Pride" honorees from across the region. The story highlights the OUT at Virtua Colleague Community, and features quotes and photos of colleagues who help make Virtua a welcoming place for all people. Read [here](#).

### Medical Student Saves Woman's Life with CPR

Last winter, Karen Silverio collapsed in the parking lot of Rowan Virtua College of Osteopathic Medicine. A Rowan University police officer started chest compressions, and minutes later, third-year student Krzysztof Zembrzuski pulled into the lot. "He came over and he gave me CPR compressions," Silverio said. "He did them correctly and he definitely saved my life." Zembrzuski also used a defibrillator to shock Silverio, and didn't stop trying to revive her. Silverio's recovery is miraculous, said both patient and student. Watch on [NBC 10](#).

### Virtua Executive Shares Advice for Attracting and Retaining Colleagues

A prominent industry publication recently asked 36 health care leaders how they attract and keep talented workers. Dr. Tarun Kapoor, SVP and chief digital transformation officer, offered his insights, including Virtua's "relentless focus on purpose and culture." He noted, "Our belief that Virtua is 'here for good' remains our North Star for our workforce and a magnet" for people who share Virtua's values. Read in [Becker's Hospital Review](#).

## The Power of the Human Experience Story of Resilience and Connection at Virtua Willingboro Hospital

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The human experience holds immeasurable power. The team at Virtua Willingboro Hospital's emergency department (ED) has demonstrated that nurturing human connections can lift us up in the face of triumph and tragedy.

On a fateful Tuesday, the ED team found themselves confronted with an unimaginable situation. A young pregnant woman, discovered unresponsive in the field, was rushed to the ED in cardiac arrest. Despite the resuscitation efforts of the paramedics and the ED team, the woman and her unborn child could not be saved.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, the leaders at Virtua Willingboro recognized the importance of supporting their team members during such difficult times. During their debrief with the team, they ensured that every colleague had an opportunity to grieve, process their emotions, and share their thoughts and concerns. Open and honest conversations were encouraged to navigate through the pain and allow the healing process to begin.

Just two days later, the Virtua Willingboro ED team experienced the cycle of life come full circle. A young woman arrived at the ED in labor, and the team rallied together once again. Their commitment and teamwork resulted in the safe delivery of a healthy baby.

Kit O'Neal, nurse director of the Virtua Willingboro ED, recalls both events:

"These are two incredible stories of support and teamwork. When we learned that another patient was on the way, our team stayed present, dedicated, and unified. We cheered for the expectant mother, standing by her side every step of the way. And when the baby entered the world, and we heard that first cry, we joined in celebration with the baby's parents. It was an absolutely breathtaking moment. Though we may be a small group, our hearts are big, and we emerged from this experience with gratitude for each other."

The ED team's journey from tragedy to triumph showcases how WE Thrive together through our resilience and strength that lies within the human spirit. It highlights the power of the Practicing Excellence principles of making human connections and lifting each other up. This remarkable story serves as a reminder to us all that even in the face of devastating loss, hope can be found, and joy can be restored.

## IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity and Equity for All

### **Juneteenth: A Celebration of Freedom and Virtua's Commitment to Equity**

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, commemorates the emancipation of enslaved individuals in the United States. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with the news that the Civil War had ended and that all enslaved individuals were now free. This historic announcement, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, marked a turning point in the struggle for liberation.

As we honor this day, Virtua stays committed to advancing equity for our colleagues and communities. Through our Culture of WE, Virtua strives to create an inclusive environment as demonstrated through our various initiatives.

The Black and African American Colleague Community (BAACC) plays a crucial role in Virtua's pursuit of equity. The BAACC has led initiatives aimed at addressing disparities and uplifting the Black and African

American community, and in doing so, creating an inclusive environment for all. Here are a few of this year's noteworthy contributions:

**Black Maternal Health Week:** BAACC organized an event focused on addressing disparities in health care experiences during Black Maternal Health Week. This event sparked vital conversations and highlighted the urgent need to improve maternal health outcomes for Black women.

**Donations to Virtua's Pediatric Mobile Services and CASTLE programs:** Donations included movie tickets to—and paperback copies of—Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, along with dolls and accessories. The BAACC joined children and their families at a recent screening of *The Little Mermaid*.

**"Setting & Realizing Your Self-Care Intentions":** A virtual event was presented by Dr. Erika Dawkins on behalf of BAACC and the VirtuAsia Colleague Community, in partnership with the WE Thrive well-being team. This wellness workshop brought almost 70 colleagues together to learn about incorporating self-care into their daily routines.

**Upcoming IDEA Events:**

[Burlington Freedom Day: A Juneteenth Celebration](#)

June 17, 2 to 7 p.m.

[Winslow Township Juneteenth](#)

June 17, 2 to 8 p.m.