

Clinician Update

March 25, 2021

Virtua Celebrates National Doctors' Day March 30

Each year on March 30, Virtua Health joins the rest of the country in celebrating National Doctors' Day, a special time to honor the physicians who help us to be well, get well, and stay well.

The last year has been like none other in our lifetimes. Together, we have felt uncertainty and apprehension; we have modified our lives to ensure our safety and that of our family and neighbors. And we have experienced the best of each other — acts of compassion and bravery, uplifting news, and good deeds.

We know you have been on the front lines this past year, joining the global fight against COVID-19. Your remarkable effort to caring for others is selfless and inspiring. We are incredibly proud of you. You epitomize Virtua's brand positioning statement: Here for Good.

To acknowledge Doctors' Day, we've planned celebrations in the cafeterias of Virtua's acute care facilities and within our VMG practices. Be on the lookout for advertisements in local media. Be on the ready if you are asked to participate in a "take a selfie with a doc" to share on social media. As always, we encourage you to take part in the [Official Virtua Colleagues' Facebook page](#) so you can see messages of gratitude from your fellow colleagues.

Of course, you are invited to celebrate your fellow colleagues. To celebrate a Virtua doctor, we encourage you to take advantage of the eCards found in the WE Applaud platform on the VINE. Special eCards to celebrate National Doctors' Day can be found in the Industry Specific category.

And thank you for making a difference in our community, every day of the year.

Virtua Cardiac Team Performs a First for South Jersey

The interventional cardiac team at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital performed South Jersey's first intravascular Shockwave lithotripsy to treat a blockage in the coronary arteries. The procedure, which received FDA approval in late February, is based on the same technology used to destroy kidney stones, utilizing waves of sonic pressure to fracture calcium buildup within a blood vessel so to allow the deployment of a stent.

"Calcium is like kryptonite when it comes to performing a coronary intervention," said Virtua interventional cardiologist John Finley IV, MD, FACC, FSCAI. "It's literally and figuratively hard and tough, making for extremely difficult stent delivery, and then once in position, even more difficult to properly expand."

The patient, a 51-year-old man on dialysis to treat his chronic kidney failure, had already undergone several cardiac procedures, including bypass surgery after suffering a series of heart attacks. He was not a candidate for additional open-heart surgery, and the condition of his arteries put him at high risk for traditional atherectomy. Dr. Finley felt the best and safest option was the Shockwave.

“The Shockwave complements our other approaches to treating coronary blockages,” said Dr. Finley. “It is an exciting tool to have available for our patients.”

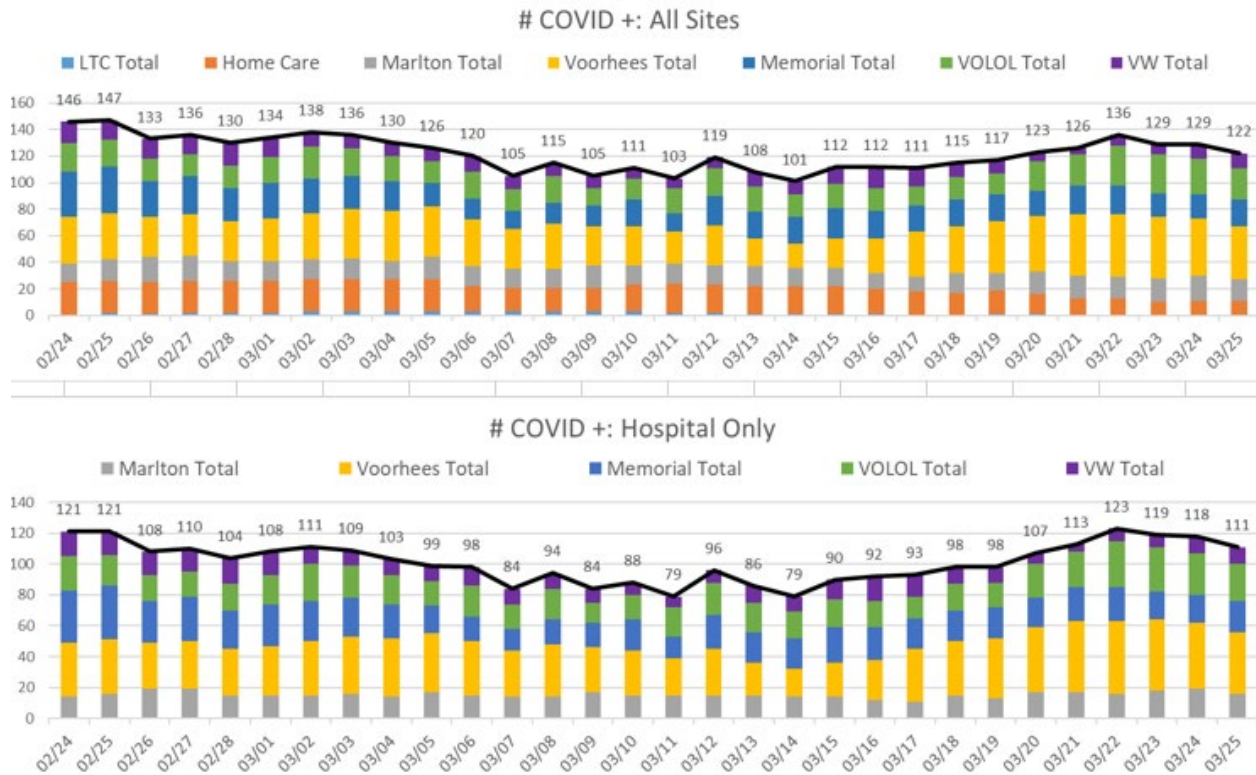
The procedure took about an hour. The patient stayed overnight in the hospital and is home now with marked improvement in his chest pain symptoms.

COVID-19 — Looking Back, Moving Forward

In order to move forward, it is necessary to acknowledge and honor the past. The events of the last 12 months have tested us all in too many ways to count, but our guiding principles and shared values have seen us through. The compassion, courage, creativity, and conviction of Virtua Health colleagues have guided the South Jersey community each step of the way, and we will lead them to better days ahead — together.

View the video [here](#) and take a look back.

Virtua COVID-19 Census



Fast Facts

- Once more, the rate of transmission in New Jersey is creeping up and currently stands at 1.1. (See our story on Gov. Phil Murphy’s halt on loosening restrictions.)
- Locally, in the tri-county area, there have been a total of 2,384 confirmed deaths, as of 1 p.m. today. The state also reports “probable” deaths from COVID-19, with figures shared separately on the [state dashboard](#). For the three counties, probable deaths would account for an additional 190 fatalities.

- The total number of cases are as follows:
 - Burlington County 33,550
 - Camden County 42,369
 - Gloucester County 22,860

COVID-19 and Health Care Disparities

Our lives have all been impacted in some way by the coronavirus – social distancing, economic disruption, grieving the loss of loved ones, longing for a return to normal. The pandemic also continues to underscore how health care disparities impact outcomes among persons of color, with Black and Hispanic communities disproportionately affected with increased mortality and morbidity.

Access to health care, insurance, food, and housing certainly influence outcomes. However, trust in the medical establishment also plays an important role. It [has been documented](#) that African Americans, in particular, have a longstanding distrust of the medical system, linked to the infamous Tuskegee experiments, the exploitation of Henrietta Lacks, and similar events tied to unethical medical research. These stories have taken hold in the minds and hearts of minority communities. This distrust is [evident in national data](#), and has impacted not just outcomes for those who contract COVID-19 but is now influencing acceptance of the vaccine.

Virtua spoke with Jenice Baker, MD, a nationally recognized expert and passionate advocate for health equity. Dr. Baker has written and lectured on health care disparities, including an article for *ACEP Now*, “COVID-19 While Black.” [In this video](#), Dr. Baker discusses how health care disparities impact health outcomes, and what we can do to build trust and change the narrative.

Dr. Baker touches upon a number of issues that were recently echoed in a [YouTube video](#) in which Jubril Oyeyemi, MD, a Virtua hospitalist who serves a number of community roles, including medical director for both the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and Virtua’s Community Health Institute (CHI), as well as founder and chief medical officer for the Cherry Hill Free Clinic. In the message, Dr. Oyeyemi addresses key questions related to vaccine hesitancy and encourages minority communities to get the vaccine.

That advice is needed now more than ever. The vaccine is here, yet we are already seeing significant racial disparities among those who have received it thus far. State Department of Health data, reported in [NJ.com](#) in late January, noted “Just 3% [of those who received the vaccine] have been Black and another 5% Hispanic or Latino. Yet Blacks account for more than 1 in 10 of all COVID-19 cases here, while Hispanics make up 26.2% of the state’s cases.”

In efforts to build trust of the COVID-19 vaccine with our high-risk communities, Virtua is taking the lead in communicating to our colleagues and community that the vaccines are safe, that they were tested amongst a diverse group of people, and that the vaccines are accessible. Virtua President and CEO Dennis Pullin shared an [op-ed](#) on the subject, which influenced sports journalist Stephen A. Smith in his decision to get the vaccine—a message he shared [on ESPN](#) and during an interview with [Don Lemon on CNN](#). A video of Smith’s vaccine appointment played as he later spoke with Dr. Anthony Fauci on [ESPN's First Take](#).

We have engaged our civic leaders to speak to the issues of trust and safety. To encourage other African Americans to get vaccinated, State Senator Troy Singleton [publicly received his first vaccine dose](#) at the

Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega Site that is a partnership with Virtua. Senator Singleton also hosted a virtual roundtable discussion with State Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli, Dr. Margaret Fisher, and Dennis Pullin. (Watch [here](#).)

Virtua's physician leaders are making a difference as well. Cardiologist Dr. Troy Randle, who recovered from a stroke related to COVID, was featured in a [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) story that documented the moment when he received the vaccine. [Dr. Oyejemi wrote an op-ed](#) specifically addressing his reasons for getting the shot.

The work continues, but we believe that shining a light on health care disparities is an important first step in addressing this important issue. Our clinical staff and frontline workers continue to lead by example as they receive their vaccines to protect themselves, their patients, and communities. And we give thanks to those who are delivering the vaccine message through posts on social media and through ambassador programs. We encourage you to do the same.

Virtua COVID-19 Testing Sites Update

Virtua recently made some changes to its testing site locations. Moving forward, all COVID-19 testing will take place at the Virtua Barry D. Brown Health Education Center (HEC) in Voorhees, by appointment only. Hours of operation:

- **Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday:** 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 to 4 p.m.
- **Tuesday and Wednesday:** 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. (no p.m. session)

On March 22, the testing center at the Virtua Health & Wellness Center – Moorestown closed permanently. Since its opening on July 10, 2020, the center administered 26,923 COVID-19 tests.

"On behalf of the team, it has been our honor to serve the Burlington County community when they needed us the most," said Colleen Wahl, Virtua Medical Group director of practice integration, who managed testing center operations. "However, closing the testing center gives us all hope that we are on the road to recovery with brighter days ahead! Special thanks to the incredibly dedicated and compassionate team in Moorestown (some since Camden and Willingboro) that spanned so many departments. I hope to see the team again at the testing site in Voorhees."

COVID-19 Variants Put Brakes on Loosening Restrictions in New Jersey

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy announced this week that an indefinite pause is being implemented on further measures to reopen the state because of the COVID variants circulating around the country. Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli said that the state is grappling with 400 reported cases of the variants, most of them involving the UK variant, but also the Brazilian, South African, and California variants.

Virtua's head of infectious disease, Dr. Martin Topiel, notes the importance of vaccination and safety protocols to control variants. "The coronavirus is mutating in an attempt to counteract our vaccines and treatments. That's why it's so important to control any further spread of the disease through vaccination and safety measures such as masking and social distancing," he said. "It is a competing race. The faster the population is vaccinated, the better we will mitigate against an opportunity for further viral spread and mutation in the vulnerable and unprotected. Studies show that the vaccines administered today are effective against the most common variant b117."

Gov. Murphy conceded that the state is "back to leading the nation in the spread of this virus." He noted that the statewide positivity rate is 8.48%, compared to neighboring New York's 3.22%. "I wouldn't say it's an alarm," he added. "Getting that balance right is not easy. So, we're therefore using caution."

For more, ABC News reports it [here](#).

Virtua in the News

COVID-19 Long-Haulers: Can They Still Get Better? Even a year after contracting COVID-19, some patients are still recovering. Virtua pulmonologist **Dr. Eric Szejman** and one of his patients discussed the impact of "long COVID" in this *Philadelphia Inquirer* story. In fact, Virtua is in the process of rolling out a special program for these patients. Read [here](#).

Giant Steps Forward in Cancer Treatment. Local experts, including Virtua breast surgeon **Dr. Elizabeth Revesz**, shared several advances in this *South Jersey Magazine* story. Dr. Revesz spoke about two innovations that are improving surgical outcomes for women. Read [here](#).

Virtua Expert says COVID-19 Vaccine is the Only Way to 'Get Back to Normal.' Virtua Chief Clinical Officer **Dr. Reg Blaber** discussed encouraging vaccine milestones and the new Johnson & Johnson vaccine on *KYW Newsradio*. Listen or read [here](#).

Rowan Students' Sepsis App Advances to Real-World Testing. An app designed by Rowan University students is undergoing real-world testing at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. This *Rowan Today* story includes remarks from three Virtua colleagues: **Debra Gillen**, director of outcomes for neuroscience; **Dr. Alan Pope**, chief medical officer at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital; and **Jamie Bricker**, stroke coordinator. Read [here](#).

Deadline Tomorrow: Your Opportunity to Rank the Best Hospitals

There is one day left to influence the reputation scores for this year's *U.S. News & World Report* "Best Hospitals." The survey is now underway, soliciting clinicians' opinions on which hospitals are among the best at providing care for complex or challenging conditions.

The survey utilizes Doximity, the professional network for physicians, to complete the questioning electronically. Survey-eligible physicians who were Doximity users as of Nov. 1, 2020, can take the survey online.

How to vote: Go to [Doximity.com](https://www.doximity.com) or [the survey page on Doximity.com](#). You may need to click on the *U.S. News* graphic or button, and then simply follow the instructions.

The survey ends tomorrow, **March 26**.

If you were not registered on Doximity by Nov. 1, 2020, you can register now at [doximity.com](https://www.doximity.com) to ensure eligibility to complete next year's survey.

Advanced Practice Nurse and Physician Assistant Educational Series

The updated schedule for the Educational Series for Advanced Practice Nurses (APC) and Physician Assistants is now available.

This educational series is designed to address core competencies of APCs within Virtua Medical Group primary care practices. This session will review pertinent history and physical information, review a cardiac risk assessment, discuss appropriate diagnostic evaluations, identify appropriate clearance from specialties, and review 12-lead EKGs for the operating room. Our primary care APCs will successfully meet their clinical competencies by incorporating their new knowledge and or skills into their practice areas.

Register for the APC Educational Series on the [Virtua Learning System](#). Click [here](#) to view the flyer.

Virtua Co-Ed Softball League — Registration Now Open

We invite you to join Virtua's fun and friendly colleague softball league for the 2021 season. All experience levels are welcome.

Registration is open through **Friday, April 9**. Games will be held on either Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday nights. Games start at 6:15 p.m.

To register, click on the [Wellness button](#) on the VINE. View the flyer [here](#).