

Clinician Update

November 17, 2022

Virtua Pulmonologist Co-Authors COVID Study Published in *Circulation*

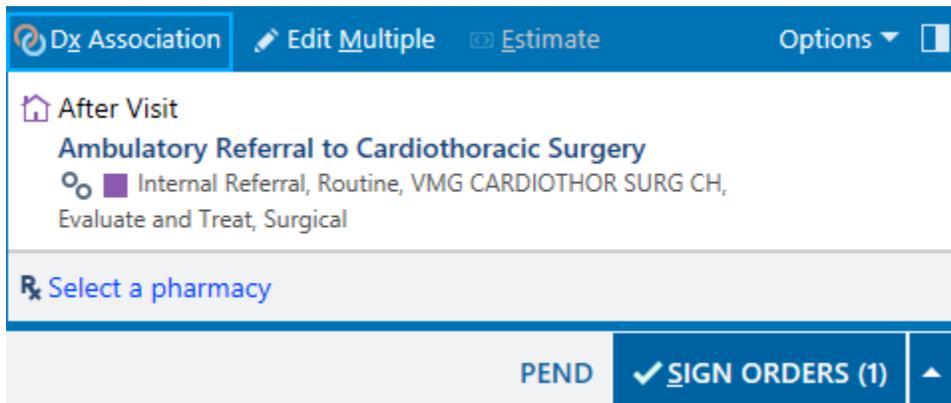
Virtua pulmonologist Emilio Mazza, MD, PhD, medical director of the intensive care unit at Virtua Mount Holly Hospital, and chief, section of Critical Care – Virtua North, co-authored a study recently published in *Circulation* that analyzed the efficacy and safety of prophylactic full-dose anticoagulation and antiplatelet therapy in critically ill COVID-19 patients.

The randomized, controlled COVID-PACT (Prevention of Arteriovenous Thrombotic Events in Critically-ill COVID-19 Patients Trial) study concluded that full-dose anticoagulation (but not clopidogrel) reduced thrombotic complications. COVID-PACT may be relevant when revisiting current consensus treatment guidelines, which suggest using standard-dose prophylactic-intensity anticoagulation over full-dose anticoagulation in the critically ill population with COVID-19.

In addition to his clinical titles, Dr. Mazza is also Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine.

[Click here](#) to view the article.

Convenient Referral for Virtua Aortic Clinic



The screenshot shows the Epic EMR interface for a referral. At the top, there are navigation buttons: "Dx Association", "Edit Multiple", "Estimate", and "Options". Below this, the referral is categorized as "After Visit" and "Ambulatory Referral to Cardiothoracic Surgery". The referral details include "Internal Referral, Routine, VMG CARDIOTHOR SURG CH, Evaluate and Treat, Surgical". There is a "Select a pharmacy" field. At the bottom, there are buttons for "PEND" and "SIGN ORDERS (1)".

Referring a patient for aortic disease evaluation has never been easier. Utilizing the “Ambulatory Referral to Cardiothoracic Surgery” option in Epic provides a one-stop-shop for the seamless referral and treatment of your patients in need of aortic disease treatments. [Click here](#) for a full list of procedures offered by Virtua Cardiothoracic Surgery, including aortic disease.

When you select “Ambulatory Referral to Cardiothoracic Surgery” in Epic, this will initiate a request where a member of our team will connect directly with the patient to arrange an appointment for evaluation and testing. The CT Surgery Team will follow the patient and provide any needed intervention should the circumstances arise. Throughout the process, the team will remain in close contact with you.

For any questions regarding this process or how the team can best serve your patients, contact Louisa Waszewski (LWaszewski@virtua.org or 856-547-0389) or Stephen Bechtel (SBechtel@virtua.org or 856-325-4290).

Antibiotic Awareness Week, Nov. 18 to 24

U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week is an annual observance that raises awareness of the threat of antibiotic resistance and the importance of improving antibiotic prescribing and use. In recent decades, overuse of antibiotics has contributed to significant increases in the number of multi-drug-resistant bacteria in our community and in our hospitals. Patients with multi-drug-resistant organisms are more likely to have negative outcomes, such as longer length of hospital stay or are required to use treatments that are more toxic and costly than standard antibiotics.

Virtua Health's Antimicrobial Stewardship Program (ASP) works year-round to promote appropriate antibiotic use, prioritize patient safety, and minimize antibiotic resistance in our hospitals. Infectious Diseases clinical pharmacist Jessica Colmerauer answers a few questions below about Virtua Health's approach to antimicrobial stewardship:

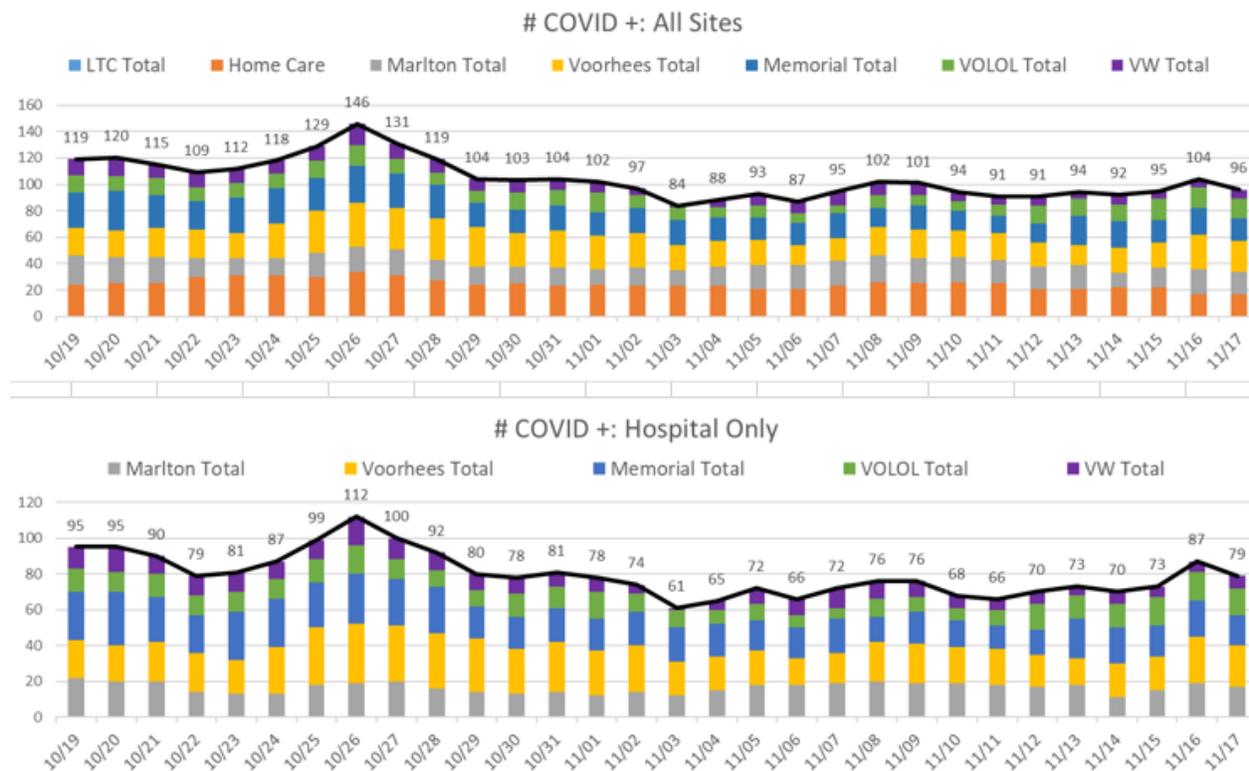
How does Virtua promote appropriate antibiotic usage in the organization for its patients? Within our hospitals, the ASP employs many strategies to promote appropriate antibiotic use. Throughout 2022, the ASP conducted audits of prescribing trends in community-acquired pneumonia and colorectal surgery prophylaxis in order to assess areas of improvement and identify potential solutions with specific provider groups. In addition to providing direct feedback from these audits, the ASP works to optimize clinical decision support in Epic, such as order sets and clinical pathways to guide the most appropriate prescribing. Additional ASP initiatives include supporting antibiotic restrictions, releasing annual antibiograms, and promoting allergy assessments in patients with beta-lactam allergy.

What is the purpose of restricting certain antimicrobials to approval by the Infectious Disease physician team? The primary reason for restriction of certain antimicrobials is to preserve these antimicrobials for future use. Overuse of broad-spectrum antimicrobials such as carbapenems (even for one dose) can lead to increased risk of resistant organisms and higher risks of collateral damage such as *C. difficile* infection or adverse reactions.

What is the risk of alternative therapy to patients with reported penicillin allergies? How does this intersect with antimicrobial stewardship? Patients with reported penicillin allergies are more likely to receive suboptimal therapy and experience negative outcomes. Alternative therapies to beta-lactams, such as clindamycin and fluorquinolones, carry a higher risk of causing *C. difficile* infection. Literature suggests that approximately 10% of the population reports a penicillin allergy, but true allergy is rare (<1% of patients). Furthermore, the risk of cross-reactivity between penicillin and cephalosporins is low, and it may often be appropriate to use cephalosporins in patients with minor reactions to penicillin. Assessing reported penicillin allergies promotes optimal antibiotic use by avoiding potentially suboptimal alternative therapies.

For more information about Virtua Health's Antimicrobial Stewardship team and to access to resources such as antibiograms, visit the [Antimicrobial Stewardship Webpage](#) on the VINE.

COVID-19 Census



Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey was reported today as 0.88.
- The total number of cases reported as of 3 p.m. today:
 - Atlantic County 66,826
 - Burlington County: 106,789 cases
 - Camden County: 129,569 cases
 - Gloucester County: 66,043 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, Gloucester, and Atlantic counties: 4,934.
- The state’s Vaccination Overview dashboard reported 19,635,518 doses of vaccine have been administered.

Monkeypox Stats

As of Wednesday’s weekly posting, the number of probable and confirmed cases of monkeypox cases in New Jersey: 759.

Last Call: Advances in Liver Disease: Updates from the 2022 U.S. National Liver Meeting Nov. 19, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Participants in this program will gain insight into the new therapeutic modalities for primary liver cancer and liver failure; identify the outcomes of the current clinical trial evaluating the new agents for aggressive forms of fatty liver disease; and name the indication and limitations of liver transplantation, including use of living and extended donors.

Speakers include Drs. Santiago Munoz, Simona Rossi, Ashraf Malek, Nyan Latt, Hisham ElGenaidi, and Ann Thompson of Virtua Advanced Transplant & Organ Health.

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Medical Society of New Jersey (MSNJ). Virtua is accredited by the Medical Society of New Jersey (MSNJ) to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

Virtua designates this continuing medical education activity for a maximum of 4.5 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity. [Click to view the flyer.](#)

Updates to COVID-19 Protocols for Symptomatic Colleagues

As we move into the endemic stage of COVID-19, we are making several updates to our COVID-19 protocols for colleagues. Effective **Friday, Nov. 18**, colleagues will no longer call the Triage Line to report symptoms of COVID-19. Instead, pursuant to the updated [Infectious Disease of an Employee policy](#), colleagues who have new onset symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will take a rapid antigen (home test) prior to reporting to work. If the test is negative, and the requirements detailed below are met, the colleague may report to work with a mask properly worn at all times.

When is a home test required before reporting to work? Any colleague with any of the following symptoms must test for COVID-19 using a rapid antigen (home test) prior to reporting to work:

- Fever > 100°F and/or chills without another known cause (i.e. urinary tract infection)
- New onset cough
- New onset sore throat
- New onset sinus symptoms

What happens if the home test is positive?

- Colleague must follow normal departmental procedure to call out sick.
- Colleague must also report the positive result using the [online assessment tool](#) available on the Colleague Corner portal.
- All positive tests must be reported.

When can colleagues return to work after a positive test? Click to view the [Return to Work Guidelines](#) available in the COVID-19 Resource Center on the Colleague Corner portal.

What happens if the home test is negative?

- If the test is negative, the colleague may report to work—masked at all times when coughing—**only if** the colleague has been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of anti-fever medications and is not experiencing any diarrhea, and otherwise meets the conditions to work set forth in the [Infectious Disease of an Employee policy](#).
- **Note:** Consistent with Appendix A of the Infectious Disease of an Employee policy—no matter the cause of an illness—colleagues may not work until fever-free for 24 hours without the use of anti-fever medications and until after any diarrhea ceases.
- The colleague must re-test 24 hours after the first negative test. If the second test is positive, follow the steps outlined above for a positive test.

What happens if the home test is negative, but the colleague has symptoms that require them to be out of work (i.e., fever or diarrhea)?

- If the first test is negative, but the colleague has symptoms that require them to remain out of work per Appendix A of the Infectious Disease of an Employee policy, the colleague will follow normal departmental procedure to call out sick.
- Colleague must re-test 24 hours after the first negative test. If this test is also negative but symptoms persist, the colleague should seek care through their primary care provider (PCP). If the second test is positive, follow the steps outlined above for a positive test.
- The colleague will follow the guidelines in Appendix A of the Infectious Disease of an Employee policy to return to work.
- Colleague may not return to work until the guidelines in Appendix A of the Infectious Disease of an Employee policy are met for return.

Virtua in the News

- **Dennis Pullin Honored by Junior Achievement and Catholic Charities** - Virtua President and CEO [Dennis Pullin](#) was one of three [inspiring leaders](#) inducted into the [N.J. Business Hall of Fame](#) by [Junior Achievement of New Jersey](#). The event benefits JANJ's youth leadership initiative, which trains high school students in financial empowerment and work readiness—so they, too, can become role models and help their communities.

At the awards event, Dennis told the room of high school-age future leaders: "For me and the 14,000 others who work for Virtua, we are guided each day by our mission—which is to help our community be well, get well, and stay well. It's that simple. We know our community counts on us, and so we work together to exceed expectations and be their trusted partner." Read in [New Jersey Business Magazine](#).

Additionally, Dennis received the *Saint Basil the Great Award* at the Catholic Charities Annual Award Dinner, in which individuals and ministries were honored for making a difference in the Diocese of Camden. Bishop Dennis Sullivan cited numerous accomplishments under Dennis' tenure, including the Eat Well Mobile Grocery Store and the smooth introduction of Lourdes Health System into Virtua three years ago. Dennis also helped ensure that Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital would retain its Catholic identity. Read in the [Catholic Star Herald](#).

- **Flu Cases Surge, Emergency Departments are Swamped** - Two Virtua experts appeared in TV news reports on the current spike in flu and other upper-respiratory illnesses, including RSV and COVID-19. Dr. Jeff Seiden, medical director for pediatric services at Virtua, spoke on [Fox 29](#). Dr. Dennis Guest, Virtua's vice president of clinical operations for emergency services, appeared on [6 ABC](#).
- **Women in Health Care Leadership: Closing the Gender Gap** - The medical workforce is 80% female, but only about 15% of health care CEOs and 18% of board chairs are women. Chrisie Scott, Virtua's senior vice president and chief marketing officer, joined other women executives to discuss how they became inspiring leaders, and how they help support other women to rise in the health care ranks. The article, originally published in the spring, was reissued this week. Read in [HealthLeaders](#).
- **New Colleague Group Kickstarts Veterans Day Observance** - Virtua's new "WE Serve" colleague community organized free meals on Veterans Day at all five Virtua hospital cafeterias for any veteran or military member in the community or on Virtua's staff. WE Serve focuses on the priorities of present and former armed forces members on Virtua's workforce, while also helping the local military community. Read in [NJBiz](#) and [The Trentonian](#).

- **Paul Sarnese Speaks at Conference in Dubai** - Paul Sarnese, AVP of safety, security, and emergency preparedness, recently traveled to Dubai to participate in the 45th Annual World Hospital Congress in Dubai. The topic of the session was “Our People: Maintaining Wellness in Times of Epic Change,” in which he discussed the facts of violence in health care and leading practices to mitigate violence to keep our colleagues safe.

Virtua Willingboro Hospital Unveils Reflection Garden and Tranquility Courtyard

In promoting wellness and nurturing the mind, body, and spirit of our colleagues, the Virtua Willingboro Hospital RISE team has unveiled two serenity gardens on the campus. Colleagues can now enjoy the **Reflection Garden** near same-day surgery, and the **Tranquility Courtyard** outside of the cafeteria. The gardens showcase an assortment of multicolored flowers, bushes, water lily bowls, trees, and chimes.

Colleagues and visitors are encouraged to meditate, pray, enjoy meals, and experience the gardens’ botanical beauty in a relaxed setting.

See the good? Share the good! Email hellogood@virtua.org with stories, letters, and cards about fellow colleagues who are spreading the good in our campuses and the community. They may be featured in an upcoming edition of Clinician Update.

Give for Good to Be Here for Good

More than **730** colleagues have already participated in Give for Good this year. We appreciate everyone who has chosen to partner with Virtua through philanthropy. Our gifts make a tremendous difference for our patients, the community we serve, and each other. To learn more and make a gift, visit GiveToVirtua.org/colleagues.

Virtua Recognizes Native American Heritage Month and Transgender Week of Visibility

This month, we celebrate *Native American Heritage Month*, which acknowledges the experiences and history of various indigenous communities. Discover how native lands are connected to your hometown by checking out this [resource](#) and [interactive map](#).

WE Applaud Tip: Check out our new WE Applaud eCards to help you celebrate Native American Heritage Month!

Additionally, this week, we recognize *Transgender Week of Visibility*, culminating into *Transgender Day of Remembrance* on **Sunday, Nov. 20**—a day memorializing transgender people we have lost due to anti-trans violence.

To note: An estimated 2 million people in the U.S. identify as transgender or non-binary, and New Jersey is the first state to create a Transgender Equality Taskforce. Learn more from [Garden State Equality Human Rights Campaign](#) or reach out to OUT@virtua.org.

Join the Safety Story Sweepstakes. Clinicians Included!

Safety stories have become an important part of Virtua's High Reliability culture. They are shared during Daily Huddle, Safety Huddle, and other meetings and gatherings.

In the spirit of submitting safety stories, the clinical quality, safety, and performance improvement departments invite you to join the *Safety Story Sweepstakes*! This contest takes place from **now until Friday, Dec. 2** and encourages colleagues to submit a Great Catch or Safety Event story.

A panel of colleagues from the quality, safety, and performance improvement departments will choose the top three stories and award prizes. Additionally, the winning entries will be featured in Safety Huddles.

Click to [send in your Great Catch or Safety Event story](#) and click to [see the Prize Baskets list](#). The deadline to submit the stories is **Friday, Dec. 2**. Winners will be announced the **week of Dec. 12**.

Save the Date: Smoking Cessation Education and Support

Jan. 17, 5 to 7 p.m.

Invite your patients and neighbors to attend an educational support group to learn about the tobacco addiction process and get tools and support to help quit smoking, including free nicotine patches and discounted acupuncture. Topic discussions include addiction, stress management, and developing a personal plan to quit smoking using resources and support. Click to [view the flyer](#).

Healthy Nutrition through the Holiday Season & Beyond

Dec. 6, 5 to 6:30 p.m.

The Women of Virtua Colleague Community invites you to join a discussion of nutritious food for the holiday season and beyond. This program will include tips to maintain a healthy weight, as well as ways to prepare meals through the winter months. Additionally, they will collect non-perishable food for the Virtua Food Farmacies at the event. Top items to donate include pasta, brown rice, canned protein or vegetables, snack items, and cereal. Click to [view additional food items](#) for donation. Space is limited to 75 participants. [Register via the Virtua Learning System](#).