

## **Clinician Update**

### **November 9, 2023**

#### **Congratulations to Virtua Colleagues for Robotic Surgery Milestones**

We're thrilled to share that Virtua Health has reached two exciting surgical milestones this year: 25,000 total robotic soft-tissue surgeries and 10,000 robotic orthopedic surgeries!

"Virtua has long embraced this advanced technology, as it offers many advantages for our patients," said John Matsinger, DO, EVP and chief operating officer. "I'm extremely proud of our teams for achieving these impressive milestones, making Virtua a regional leader in robotic procedures."

Indeed, Virtua is the highest-volume robotic surgery provider in South Jersey for soft-tissue robotic surgeries, and the highest-volume in the tri-state area for orthopedic robotic surgeries.

Our teams perform a wide range of soft-tissue robotic procedures including hernia, colorectal, bariatric, gynecologic, reproductive endocrinology, thoracic, urology, hepatobiliary, and organ transplants. Our orthopedic robotic procedures include total and partial knee replacements and total hip replacements.

Congratulations to our robotic surgery teams and all colleagues who support them across the health system for these terrific accomplishments!

#### **Join Us to Celebrate**

To mark these milestones, Virtua is holding a media event, open house and robotic demonstrations.

When: **Thursday, Nov. 16**

Opening remarks, media invited at 1:15 p.m.

Open house from 1 to 4 p.m.

Where: Holman Conference Room of Virtua Voorhees Hospital (neighborhood B).

Stop by, "test drive" the robotic systems, celebrate with us, and enjoy some sweet treats!

#### **This Week's Practicing Excellence Tip: "Unintended Signals of Exclusion."**

Thank you for being *All In on Excellence*! We are now in the second week of our new program. [Here is the roadmap](#). Last week, you and your teams should have discussed the first tip under the "I Belong Here" column. If not, watch and discuss it this week along with the second tip of the series: "Unintended Signals of Exclusion." Click to [view the tip](#).

[The complete roadmap is available on Colleague Corner](#) and it ensures you and your team know exactly what tip we will focus on each week Virtua-wide. Also, a handy, one-page PDF is available for every tip in the *All In on Excellence* series and can be found in the Resource Library of the [Practicing Excellence page on Colleague Corner](#) along with other great resources to help guide the journey.

## Virtua Spotlighted by Practicing Excellence Nationally

Also, this week, Virtua leaders attended CONNECT 2023, a conference in Atlanta hosted by Practicing Excellence. There, participants were immersed into a world of inspiration, learning, and, most importantly, CONNECTION to energize and motivate. [Virtua President and CEO Dennis Pullin joined Stephen Beeson, MD](#), founder of Practicing Excellence in a presentation discussing Virtua's organizational journey, focusing on health equity from the board to the bedside and ultimately to the communities they serve.

Additionally, [another panel](#) included Reg Blaber, MD, EVP and chief clinical officer, Chrisie Scott, SVP and chief marketing officer, Paul Minnick, SVP of Virtua and president of Virtua Voorhees and Virtua Marlton, and Angela Collins, VP of experience and the Access Center, discussing our Practicing Excellence journey and its impact to our colleagues throughout the organization. At the event, Virtua was awarded the Commitment to Caregiver Experience Award and [Paul Minnick was awarded the Practicing Excellence 2023 Clinical Leader of the Year Award](#).

## Virtua's Network of Ambulatory Centers Now at 41

Virtua this week welcomed Orthopedic Specialist Surgi-Center (OSSC) of Newark, DE to its network of 41 ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs). The new addition joins a network of surgery centers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware—all state-of-the-art health care facilities that transform the outpatient experience and provide the highest caliber care for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures and surgery.

“OSSC is an excellent ASC with a strong clinical team,” said Barry Graf, senior vice president of partnerships and business development at Virtua Health. “We appreciate their trust in us as a partner and look forward to growing together and ensuring the long-term success and viability of the center.”

Virtua's ambulatory surgery centers provide a safe and convenient alternative to hospital-based outpatient care with a strong track record of positive patient outcomes and satisfaction. *Newsweek* recently recognized 10 Virtua ASCs in the top 30 ASCs in New Jersey. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Click [here](#) to see a map of all 41 ASCs in the Virtua network.

## Thanking Our Veterans

Please join us in honoring Virtua veterans on [Veterans Day](#), commemorated annually on **Nov. 11**. Virtua thanks our veteran colleagues for their service and is especially proud of the WE Serve Colleague Community for earning the Governor's "We Value Our Veterans" Award. An official awards ceremony will take place at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation in Holmdel, NJ.

To learn more about or join the WE Serve Colleague Community, contact: [WeServeColleagueCommunity@virtua.org](mailto:WeServeColleagueCommunity@virtua.org).

Additionally, at 11 a.m. on **Nov. 11**, all Virtua hospitals will hold a two-minute moment of silence and members and pets of the Visiting Paws program will visit patients who are veterans. Flyers on patient meal trays and overhead announcements will help notify our campus communities of the visit and tribute.

"Through our Practicing Excellence journey, we have come to fully appreciate the incredible impact of recognizing everyone we encounter as a unique individual," said Reg Blaber, MD, executive vice president and chief clinical officer for Virtua Health – and a [2023 Philadelphia Business Journal Veterans in Business honoree](#). "This Veterans Day, I invite all of us to be intentional about the ways we can honor veterans – whether that's a patient, colleague, friend, or family member. A simple 'thank you' goes a long way."

## **[Aiding Early Cancer Diagnosis for Prompt Lung-Sparing Surgery](#)**

Lung cancer causes the most cancer deaths worldwide, accounting for 1.8 million new cases and 1.6 million deaths annually. But early detection and awareness can help save lives. With this being Lung Cancer Awareness Month, we are sharing the latest in screenings offered here at Virtua, including the use of low-dose computed tomography (LDCT). This screening helps identify more pulmonary nodules when these lesions could represent early-stage lung cancer. Such neoplasms are often located deep in the lungs and are difficult to biopsy. Now through robotic-assisted bronchoscopy, our clinicians are able to extract biopsy tissue with precision and also tag the tumors for easier, more-accurate, less-invasive removal with lung-sparing surgery.

"Close to 95% of the time, we're able to biopsy the lesion that was identified on imaging, and then we can mark the location for our surgeons. That helps them see and zero in on the tumor better—and then remove it with lung-sparing robotic video-assisted thoracic surgery (VATS)," said Virtua interventional pulmonologist Mark Weir, MB ChB.

"The goal is to diminish surgical delays, and increase effectiveness for the greatest chance of cure," said Virtua interventional pulmonologist Syed Riaz, MD. "With accurate diagnosis and staging, our patients are able to go through our lung cancer pathway faster."

To read about these advancements, [click here as shared on Digital 411 in Interventional Pulmonology Today](#).

## **[Caring for Those With Pancreatic Cancer](#)**

November is Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month, and Thursday, Nov. 16 is World Pancreatic Cancer Day. The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 64,000 people will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2023, and that more than 50,000 will die from it. This attention to the disease presents an opportunity to share what the Penn Medicine | Virtua Cancer Program is providing for our patients, and to create awareness of risk factors and early detection.

“Our integrated team of oncology specialists are dedicated to providing individualized, state-of-the-art treatment and support services for patients with pancreatic cancer,” said Seth Berk, MD, a medical oncologist and hematologist of the Penn Medicine | Virtua Cancer Program. “Virtua has supported the development of a dedicated team of surgeons, GI specialists, social workers and nurse navigators to aide in the diagnosis and surgical treatment of early pancreatic malignancy.” Virtua also provides access to genetic counseling and medical oncologists who support the care of patients with all stages of disease.

[Click here](#) to learn of Virtua’s genetic counseling and testing for patients with a family history of cancer risk.

In next week’s *Clinician Update* we will provide more detail about the latest advances in pancreatic treatment including proton therapy and the skillset of board-certified hepatobiliary surgeons, as well as the managing of risk factors.

## Virtua in the News

### **A First in South Jersey: Affordable Housing & Medical Campus to Rise in Camden**

Virtua and The Michaels Organization broke ground last week on [Oliver Station](#), a Camden community that will include beautiful, affordable housing and a Virtua medical practice, less than a half-mile from Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. Read in [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#), [Courier Post](#), [NJ Pen](#), [NJ Biz](#), [TapInto Camden](#), [ROI-NJ](#), [New Jersey Business Magazine](#), and Virtua’s [press release](#). Watch on [6 ABC \(noon\)](#), [6ABC \(5 p.m.\)](#), and [NBC 10](#).

### **More Medical Schools to Add Training on Developmental Disabilities**

A new initiative is expected to dramatically expand training on intellectual and developmental disabilities at U.S. medical schools. The [Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine](#) already has received a grant through the program. The effort supports the National Inclusive Curriculum for Health Education (NICHE) Medical, an initiative of the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry. Read in [Disability Scoop](#).

### **Virtua Executive VP and Chief Strategy Officers Gives Insights on Health Equity**

In the November/December 2023 issue of *Healthcare Executive* magazine, a publication of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Virtua executive vice president and chief strategy officer Stephanie Fendrick, FACHE, MBA, described Virtua’s many mobile programs that advance health equity. She writes: “Many have thanked our health system for acknowledging the competing demands of their time and for simplifying the entry points for receiving care.” Read more in [Healthcare Executive](#).

## Surgery Publication Spotlights Virtua VP

*OR Today*, a magazine for perioperative professionals (those who work in fields related to surgery), recently profiled Virtua's Meg Coley, RN, MSN, VP for surgical services operations. An innovator who has worked to enhance nursing education, she brings three decades of experience to her current role. Read in [OR Today](#).

## Virtua Adding A.I. Tool for Behavioral Health Amid Provider Shortage

*Modern Healthcare* recently interviewed Virtua's Tarun Kapoor, MD, MBA, SVP and chief digital transformation officer, about a promising new mental-health collaboration. Virtua is introducing Woebot Health's artificial intelligence-enabled chatbot for select patients who are waiting for a behavioral health appointment. Virtua and Woebot are also creating a resource center to support clinicians' use of the chatbot. Read in [Modern Healthcare](#).

## LAST CALL: Deadline for *Philly Mag's* Top Docs of 2024 – Nov. 15

If you have a colleague who you'd like to see included in the 2024 Top Doctors issue of *Philadelphia Magazine*, now's your chance to make that happen. The magazine partners with health care researcher Castle Connolly to create a list of top doctors. Nominations are open year-long, but to make the deadline for consideration into the May 2024 Top Doctors issue, Castle Connolly has announced that the **nomination window will close Nov. 15**.

The polling is open to all licensed physicians in America who are able to nominate physicians in any medical specialty and in any part of the country. The poll does not accept self-nominations nor any duplicate nominations of the same physician per calendar year.

Castle Connolly has been reaching out to all licensed MDs and DOs in the area to submit nominations. Physicians who are vetted and selected as Castle Connolly Top Doctors will have a listing on the Castle Connolly website and may be eligible to appear in this special issue of *Philadelphia Magazine*.

- Physicians wishing to nominate someone can register here: [nominations.castleconnolly.com](https://nominations.castleconnolly.com)
- Each nominating physician will need to use their first and last name, email, hospital, specialty, and ZIP code.
- A nomination code for 2023 and a link to the nomination site will then be automatically emailed.
- Each calendar year, a physician may nominate: 15 in their own specialty, 7 in each Family Medicine/Internal Medicine/Pediatrics, and 5 in each of the remaining specialties.
- Helpful general info can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- Nomination submissions via the [portal](#) are due by: **Nov. 15**.

Congratulations to the 120-plus physicians from Virtua Medical Group and Virtua Integrated Network selected for *Philadelphia* magazine's Top Docs list in 2023, listed [here](#).

## VOTE: 2024 Top Docs for Kids

It's that time of the year when *SJ Mag Media* asks South Jersey doctors to nominate colleagues for their Top Docs for Kids issue. There are many colleagues amongst us who are exemplars in pediatric medicine, and this is an opportunity to give them some recognition.

Please complete the [physician's ballot here](#). The online voting link is a private link. Please do not forward it or share it to anyone who is not a physician practicing in SJ.

Physicians must provide their name, practice name and medical license number in order to cast their ballot.

The physicians you nominate must work in South Jersey.

Only physicians may cast a ballot.

**Deadline for ballot submissions is 5 pm on Nov. 30.**

Please note that the 2024 Top Docs for Kids [Patient Poll](#) is open now as well and can be shared with patients. And, if you'd like to see last year's Top Docs for Kids, [click here](#).

Separately, looking ahead, the *SJ Mag Media* 2024 Top Docs distinction will be on the ballot in March. That poll will honor physicians chosen by their peers – and patients – and will be published in September. More details on that when the polling opens. To see 2023's Top Docs, click [here](#).

## What Patients Are Saying About Our Clinicians

Through their reviews, patients are revealing their confidence in their clinicians. Note the following recent examples and how the patient felt about the experience, and the clinician referenced:

- “An amazing doctor. He has been the best in helping me and my husband through every difficult time during our losses and medical care. The best a person can ask for. He is the most caring person I have ever met. He deserves 100 stars.” (Nurain Fuseini, MD)
- “She is the best. She always takes the time to address my needs, whether it's an in-office visit or telehealth. If I leave a message regarding a medication change or refill, she addresses it within 24 hours which is great. She is a great communicator and very knowledgeable. What's most important for me is that she takes the time to listen to my needs and she never rushes an appointment. If there is ever a small wait time, it's because she treats her patients all the same. Which says a lot. Thank you, Dr. Patterson.” (Denne Thomas-Patterson, MD)
- “He has great bedside manner and is very professional. I had trigger thumb surgery, and I could not be happier with the results. Thank you, Dr. Ragland!” (Raymond Ragland III, MD)

- “She was great. She was very kind and she seemed to really care about my issues and my treatment. She ordered lots of tests and other things to get to the bottom of what I have going on. Very pleased.” (Humaira Khan, MD)
- “He is a great doctor and a great person. I’ve been with him over 10 years and he always is caring and gives great medical advice. He calls you and checks up on you.” (Steven Santangelo, DO)

## Get to Know Bariatric Surgeon Gaurav Sharma, MD

General and Bariatric Surgeon Gaurav Sharma, MD, says bariatric surgery is a long-term comprehensive commitment. Find out how he approaches after-surgery care and his dedication to be here for good for his patients.

Outside of the office, you might find him with his family camping outdoors, or spending time painting. Find out how his artful hobby connects in an interesting way with his mastery of robotic surgery. [Click to view.](#)

## Successfully Treat Patient Obesity: A Comprehensive Approach, Nov. 18

Virtua’s bariatric surgery program has planned a learning opportunity for interested clinicians on **Saturday, Nov. 18** at the Barry Brown Health Education Center in Voorhees. The event is entitled [“Successfully Treat Patient Obesity: A Comprehensive Approach”](#) and will feature metabolic & bariatric experts Samuel Wasser, MD, FACS, FASMBS; Emeka Acholonu, MD, FACS, FASMBS; Gaurav Sharma, MD, FACS, FASMBS; Srikanth Parsi, MD, FACS; and Michelle Hunt, Psy.D, LCADC.

Dr. Wasser, medical director of bariatric surgery, will serve as facilitator. “With the disease of obesity increasing in prevalence and multiple new frontiers for treatment of the disease advancing, this will be an excellent learning opportunity especially for primary care, cardiology, pulmonary, and endocrinology providers to gain insight of the complicated diagnosis, broaching the subject of obesity with their patients, and new treatment plan options now available,” he said.

“It will also help providers understand that the disease of obesity is a chronic metabolic disorder with neurochemical dysregulation at its core and help them gain insight into both medical and surgical modalities available to successfully treat their patients.”

To register for this event, please go to the Virtua Learning System (VLS) on the Colleague Corner and search for “Successfully Treat Patient Obesity.” Click [here](#) for a flyer which includes the accreditation statement. CME is available for VMG and VIN clinicians who attend. For further information please contact Lisa Shaw, director of digestive health, at [lshaw@virtua.org](mailto:lshaw@virtua.org) or 856-355-0877.

## Look for Upcoming Clinical Tab Coming to Colleague Corner

With Virtua's "new" intranet providing pertinent information to thousands of colleagues, the marketing and I.T. teams are continuing to decommission the Virtua VINE while ensuring all necessary/useful content finds a new, long-term home on Colleague Corner.

On **Monday, Nov. 20**, two new tabs will be added to the Colleague Corner's coral navigation bar. They are a "Clinical" tab for providers and a "Resources" tab for all colleagues.

## Annual Mandatory Conflict of Interest Disclosure Available on Virtua Works

Virtua colleagues who are supervisor-level and above and **all employed health care providers** (physicians, nurse practitioners, anesthesiologists, and physician assistants) are required to complete the annual Conflict of Interest Disclosure Attestation by **Thursday, Nov. 30**.

The Conflict of Interest Disclosure Attestation will be available on the home page of Virtua Works under *Announcements*. Click *View More Announcements* to complete the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Attestation.

Should you have any questions, contact Ryan Peoples, compliance manager (856-355-0729), or Raquel Ravelo, corporate compliance auditor (856-355-0739).

## Peer Supporter Trainings Begin Soon

We invite you to [join](#) WE Support as a peer supporter. We still seek peer supporters from the following roles: physician, clinician, nurse, and patient logistics professional for the first round of training that will take place on **Nov. 15**.

Training will help volunteer peer supporters recognize common stress indicators and identify where individuals fall on the stress continuum. Participants will also learn actionable strategies and coping skills to support colleague well-being and mental and emotional health. Finally, peer supporters will be educated on available resources through Virtua and community resources to support colleague well-being. Once trained, these peer supporters will help to foster an environment where sharing and seeking support for our struggles is welcomed and encouraged at Virtua.

To learn more about WE Support and the peer supporter nomination process, visit the [WE Support page](#) or email [Caitlyn Van Wagner](#).

## Jamaar Davis joins Dennis Pullin on Here for Good: Inside Edition

Jamaar Davis has been a familiar face at Virtua for nearly 17 years, having started in the security department and now taking the lead of the patient observer program. In these roles, Jamaar and his

team ensure that patients feel safe and supported during tough times. Observers are compassionate, have the ability to de-escalate comprising situations, and keep everyone safe. A Renaissance Man, Jamaar hits the books, pursuing his Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling. When he's not studying or at work, Jamaar is on the tennis court or jet-setting to his next travel adventure.

Click to [get to know Jamaar](#).

## IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

We wish a [Happy Diwali or Deepavali](#) to those celebrating this five-day holiday, starting **Nov. 12**. It is also known as the [Festival of Lights](#), focusing on good over evil or light over darkness. Learn more about the origins of this holiday, typically celebrated and observed by those of Hindu, Jain, and Sikh religious backgrounds, and secularly around the world.

[Transgender Awareness Week](#) is also observed on **Nov. 13 to 19**, ending with **Transgender Day of Remembrance** on **Nov. 20**. This week was created to bring about awareness and action to learn more about the existence and needs of transgender people, their stories, and experiences. Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) was established in remembrance of those who have lost their lives due to anti-transgender violence.

## Supporting Each Other During Challenging Times

Spread the word. We encourage all colleagues to take advantage of the resources available to help process and cope with incredibly difficult world news. In addition to utilizing our partner Carebridge, colleagues may also be interested in learning more about the following third-party organizations.

- [Palestinian American Community Center](#): In-person support sessions will be available soon, please check the website for details.
- [Jewish Family & Children's Service of Southern New Jersey \(JFCS\)](#): Virtual support sessions are scheduled for the community-at-large and open to Virtua colleagues to join. The session dates and times are:

Tuesday, November 14, 12:00 to 1 p.m.

Wednesday, November 15, 4 to 5 p.m.

Thursday, November 16, 8 to 9 p.m.

## Spiritual Care at Virtua

Virtua's spiritual care team is another resource to help colleagues in times of stress, anxiety, despair, and other strong emotions. Marge McGinley, chaplain, offers these suggestions.

**How can Virtua colleague practice self-care?** Self-care begins by understanding what is in your control and what is not. Due to our current technology, we literally see what soldiers and victims of war see,

and yet we cannot directly assist. This causes feelings of desperation. As human beings — especially those who have the gift of compassion, like those of us who care for the sick — we are even more impacted by these visuals.

One easy step in self-care is to turn off your news feeds that present these visuals and give yourself a respite. Also, get away from social media that contains hate-filled speech. Self-care is a choice. We have to turn off the feeds in our lives that draw unnecessary energy from us. Tune in as you think is needed so that you're not completely out of the loop on world events but recognize that the constant news feed does not help you or those impacted by war.

Next, find something that brings you rest – a good football game, a walk in the park, chatting with a friend, spending time in prayer for peace – take that time for you.

**How can Virtua colleagues support their family, friends, and team-mates?** If a friend, family member, or colleague is suffering from sadness because they or a member of their family is being impacted by the current events, offer supportive listening and acceptance of their concerns. One of the best tools to helping others is to stop and listen. Think of how often we say, “How are you doing?” but our feet keep moving. If you see someone who appears to be having a rough day, offer a listening ear. If you take the word “listen” and scramble the letters, you will see the word “silent.” It is often in the silence, truly listening, that a person feels understood. If your colleague and you are open to prayer, offer to pray with this person.

**How can colleagues access the spiritual care team?** Pastoral care is a “qliq” away. Our chaplaincy at our hospitals is available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. If you wish to have a chaplain come and spend time with your staff, or you feel a staff member would benefit from a listening ear, use the Qliq program and look for Spiritual Care in the Groups tab. Please include your hospital and your extension.