

## Clinician Update

### October 5, 2023

#### In Case You Missed It: Important COVID Communication

Earlier this week, all Virtua colleagues received an email from Reg Blaber, MD, EVP and chief clinical officer, regarding the increase in COVID cases.

Here is the message in full, in case you missed it:

*As we enter the fall season, I want to make sure you are aware of the significant uptick of COVID infections in our community and, with that, our hospitals and clinics. As of today, a rapidly rising number of our colleagues are out sick with either the flu or COVID infections.*

*I bring this to your attention so that you can be thoughtful about how you protect yourself from these respiratory illnesses. As always, hand hygiene is your number one defense. This is followed closely by masking around those who are ill and protecting others when you are sick with a respiratory illness by doing the same.*

*As health care providers and professionals, we also have an opportunity—actually a responsibility—to counter rampant misinformation with sound, scientific information and resources. Encourage patients to get their flu shots and to talk to their physicians about COVID-19 vaccines.*

*Other health systems with a higher prevalence of COVID in their community are now reinstating masking policies. At this time, we do not think that such action is necessary at Virtua Health, but we do not want to become complacent. We will continue to monitor this situation closely and work with all of you to keep Virtua as safe as possible for our colleagues and patients.*

*Thank you for all that you continue to do.*

Reg Blaber, MD, FACC, MBA  
Executive Vice President & Chief Clinical Officer

#### 2023 Medical Staff Annual Meeting for Physicians

Save the Date: Thursday, Oct. 26

In keeping with the bylaws for Virtua's medical staffs, October is the month for our annual meeting for physician members. And, for the first time, this year Virtua will hold **one** meeting for the physicians of all medical staffs and campuses, on **Thursday, Oct. 26 at 6 p.m.** at the Barry D. Brown Health Education Center (HEC) in Voorhees.

"The meeting will provide a look back, as well as a preview for what is ahead," said Christopher Pomrink, DO, VP of Medical Affairs. "It will also be a great opportunity for staff physicians to connect and share camaraderie. We're looking forward to seeing all our physicians together."

An RSVP is required. Please look for an email from Isabella Lewis, [ilewis@virtua.org](mailto:ilewis@virtua.org), for your invitation and the agenda. Flu shots will also be available.

## FDA Authorizes Updated Novavax COVID-19 Vaccine Formulated to Better Protect Against Currently Circulating Variants

On October 3, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the use of a new, [updated vaccine from Novavax](#) against COVID-19 variants.

The protein-based Novavax vaccine will join the ranks of the recently [updated mRNA vaccines](#) from Pfizer and Moderna.

According to the FDA, the Novavax vaccine helps protect against the [XBB.1.5 Omicron variant](#), also known as the "Kraken" variant, for people aged 12 and older.

## It's National Primary Care Week

Virtua is proud to celebrate and highlight our dedicated physicians, clinicians, nurses, specialists, and staff year-round, and especially now during National Primary Care Week. Outside of providing essential care, primary care providers are a go-to resource for the community's health care needs.

"Whether it's the common cold or a critical illness, primary care physicians and their staff are often the first health connection to our community," said Samuel Weiner, MD, vice president and chief medical officer, Virtual Medical Group. "We have 133 primary care clinicians as part of VMG. And now with Rowan Medicine as an affiliate, even more of the South Jersey community is relying on our expertise, and we are honored to be here for them."

Click [here](#) for celebratory pictures on LinkedIn.

## Celebrating the Practicing Excellence *Patient Experience* Journey

Back in the spring, we began a system-wide journey to meaningfully explore new ways of bringing and being our best selves. As of this week, all Virtua Health colleagues should have completed the *Patient Experience* program. Let's celebrate this investment in our culture and the ways we demonstrate the human experience for everybody, always.

Note: After you complete the *Patient Experience* program, you will receive an email from Practicing Excellence via Credly ([admin@credly.com](mailto:admin@credly.com)). This email contains a link to the badge you have earned and provides an easy way for you to share the achievement on social media, including LinkedIn.

You can also use this time to catch up or to revisit favorite tips from the Practicing Excellence library. Frances Germano-Yucel, accounting manager, suggests that colleagues watch [this tip](#), which was meaningful to her. She wrote:

“My mom was a patient at Virtua Voorhees Hospital. Needing to spend the night, she was worried about being apart from my dad, with whom she'd been married for 58 years. The next morning, Dr. Alex Snyder came to her room for a cardiology consult and discussed her desire to return home. He expedited her echocardiogram and read it immediately. She was discharged that afternoon. My mom thanked Dr. Snyder and Anna, the echo tech. This [Practicing Excellence tip](#) came to mind. This is how all patients should feel. I'm proud to work here, knowing my family is in good hands.”

That 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:

- “Wonderful surgeon. He ensured my family member was thoroughly educated on their procedure. Went above and beyond. He is also very professional and kind. A million thank yous.” (Khaled El-Badawi, MD)
- “During my appointment, she provided eye contact, listened to my concerns and questions, and educated me. I felt my needs were addressed. This is the best experience I've had with an OB/GYN.” (Angela Bess, MD)
- “Great doctor. My first meeting he came right in the room and put my mind at ease.” (Gary Levin, MD)

Thank you for your commitment to Practicing Excellence and the *Patient Experience* journey. We welcome your feedback. Email your thoughts to [VirtuaClinician@virtua.org](mailto:VirtuaClinician@virtua.org).

## Honoring Our Physician Assistants

Each year from Oct. 6 to 12, we celebrate National Physician Assistant (PA) Week, which recognizes the PA profession and its contributions to our nation's health. Physician assistants represent a crucial component of a complete health care team. At Virtua, there are 188 PAs serving in a wide range of specialties.

“We appreciate their dedication and recognize the positive impact they make in the lives of patients every day,” said Christopher Pomrink, DO, VP of Medical Affairs. “They help manage acute and chronic conditions while reinforcing preventive care, and they are key advocates in improving the quality of life for our patients.”

National Physician Assistant Week began as National Physician Assistant Day, celebrated on October 6 each year, an important date for the PA profession as the birthday of Eugene A. Stead Jr., MD, of the Duke University Medical Center, who created the first class of PAs in 1965.

## Virtua Primary Care Telehealth Reaches First Year Milestone

One year ago, Virtua embarked on a mission to expand accessibility and convenience of primary care services to our communities by offering Virtua Primary Care Telehealth, a digital-first service that allows patients who are 16 years or older to establish a long-term relationship with a primary care provider from the convenience of their home, office, and beyond. The majority of patient appointments are done via video visit, with the option to see a physician in person, upon request or as needed.

This week, we are excited to celebrate its one-year anniversary, and to share news of its expansion, now with added staff, and with two in-person sites for annual visits or appointments. Virtua Primary Care Telehealth serves chronic conditions, from diabetes to high blood pressure, and provides care for minor illnesses, injuries, and UTIs. It also provides screenings (including PAP tests) and onsite lab service with curbside service to fast-track testing.

To learn more, click [here](#).

### [Organ Transplantation Today Now Posted to Digital 411](#)

Our most recent issue of the *Today* series of physician education newsletters centers on multiple advancements in organ transplantation at Virtua. [Organ Transplantation Today](#) details how broader criteria and expanded clinical capabilities have allowed Virtua to steadily increase the number of organs transplanted each year. The issue features a case study of a 33-year-old Atlantic Highlands woman with decompensated cirrhosis and liver failure who was disqualified for transplant at a North Jersey center but received a new liver—and complex, multidisciplinary care—at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital.

“Our more-flexible criteria for accepting patients into the program is research-supported and is saving lives,” said Virtua transplant surgeon Ann Thompson, DO.

[Click here to view Organ Transplantation Today](#). Remember that our library of publications has a home base on [Digital 411](#), found under “Additional Resources/Clinician Publications.” There, you can find archived copies of *Clinician Update*, as well as a growing resource of the *Today* series.

### [Virtua Health to Host Annual Gala on Nov. 4](#)

The 2023 Virtua Health Gala is set for Saturday, Nov. 4 at the Borgata Hotel, Casino, and Spa in Atlantic City. The annual black-tie event promises to be an inspiring and uplifting evening celebrating the power of philanthropy. Medtronic Chairman and CEO Geoff Martha will be honored at the event as Virtua’s 2023 Humanitarian of the Year. We will also present George F. Lynn, Virtua Health trustee, with a Distinguished Service Award. Proceeds from the gala will benefit Virtua’s Eat Well food access programs, which bring fresh, healthy food to under-resourced communities in southern New Jersey.

To join us as a sponsor of the gala or to purchase tickets, please visit [www.GiveToVirtua.org/Gala](http://www.GiveToVirtua.org/Gala).

### [Get to Know Virtua Gastroenterologist Gregory Seltzer, MD](#)

Gastroenterologist Gregory Seltzer, MD, goes the extra mile. Outside of the office, you might catch him on the track, as he's an avid runner and fitness enthusiast. He has expertise on water as well, if anyone ever needs a certified personal watercraft mechanic. But most importantly, as Virtua's medical director for Gastroenterology and Digestive Health, Dr. Seltzer is passionate about keeping his patients healthy. [Click to view.](#)

## A Hockey Enthusiast with a Heart for Healing

New this week, emergency medicine physician Stephen Janssen, DO, joins Dennis Pullin in a lively chat on "*Here for Good: Inside Edition.*"

In this [animated conversation](#), you'll learn more about this hockey-playing, sneaker-loving doctor who prefers going by the nickname "Boomer" instead of his (impressive) credentials. Also find out the valuable advice he received from his father—which he now passes on to his young son.

Click to [view the video](#).

## Virtua in the News

### **Virtua Earns 'Most Wired' Distinction 12 Years in a Row**

Virtua has been named a Most Wired health system in the U.S. by the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME). For the 12th consecutive year and the 15th time overall, this honor recognizes Virtua's comprehensive information technology (I.T.) department for teamwork, dedication, and problem solving.

Virtua has earned recognition as a certified "level 9" health system every year since CHIME enacted a 10-level rating system in 2019. This year, Virtua has been recognized as a "level 10" organization! This categorization reflects leadership in health-care technology that actively advances the industry. Please refrain from posting/discussing this achievement outside the organization until the official announcement from CHIME next week.

### **Virtua Recognized Among 100 Leading Oncology Programs**

*Becker's Hospital Review* has named Virtua to its 2023 list of "100 Hospitals and Health Systems with Great Oncology Programs." The story cites numerous accomplishments by the Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Cancer Program. Read [here](#).

### **Virtua Recognized Among 100 Leading Orthopedic Programs**

*Becker's Hospital Review* has named Virtua to its 2023 list of "100 Hospitals and Health Systems with Great Orthopedics Programs." The article highlights Virtua's network of more than 90 providers, specialists, and surgeons, and how Virtua offers complete care for a full range of orthopedic conditions across 30-plus clinical locations, 20 physical therapy and rehabilitation facilities and 26 surgery centers.

It also mentions how *U.S. News & World Report* has recognized Virtua Voorhees as a high-performing hospital for knee replacements for 2023-24 while Virtua Mount Holly Hospital was designated as a 2022 Aetna Institute of Quality for spine surgery. Read [here](#).

### **New Report Reveals Million Have Long COVID**

A new CDC report says about 18 million U.S. adults have had long COVID—about 7% of the population. This *CBS 3* story includes related comments from Virtua’s Eric Szejman, MD, pulmonologist and VP of clinical operations, and patient Joy Ezekiel-Gibson. Watch [here](#).

### **Virtua CEO Named a Top New Jersey Business Leader**

President and CEO Dennis Pullin is among its 2023 “Champions of the C-Suite.” The group, which features leaders from every New Jersey region and a wide array of industries, will be honored at a November dinner. Read in [ROI-NJ](#).

### **Virtua Expert Discusses Eagles Football Injuries**

Orthopedic sports medicine specialist Mark Schwartz, MD discussed injuries from last Sunday’s Eagles game. He offered his insights on Cam Jurgens’ apparent foot problem, Reed Blankenship’s arm injury, and Jalen Hurts’ health. Listen on [94WIP](#).

### **Virtua Doctor Discusses Farm Workers’ Risks from High Heat**

Adrienne Rigueur, DO, an emergency department physician, is featured in a story about the dangers of rising heat for New Jersey farm workers, especially the thousands of migrant workers who pick produce here each summer. Read in [NJTV](#) and [Gothamist](#).

### **Virtua’s Eat Well Programs Address Food Insecurity**

Virtua counters hunger and chronic diseases through our innovative Eat Well programs. Read in [NJPen](#).

## **Significant Enhancements to Remote Access and Password Security**

If you currently access the Virtua network remotely or plan to in the future, take note. Virtua information technology will be introducing [some significant enhancements and changes](#) to the way colleagues can access the Virtua network remotely and securely. The first stage of this process is enrollment in Microsoft Authenticator beginning **Monday, Oct. 9**.

Microsoft Authenticator is replacing Entrust as Virtua’s multifactor authentication application. To access the network remotely, you will need to migrate from Entrust to Microsoft Authenticator. This will require you to both install the application on your mobile device as well as enroll in its services.

To begin, download the Microsoft Authenticator Application onto your mobile device. Search for Microsoft Authenticator in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. Once installed, follow the instructions below for enrolling in Microsoft Authenticator.

[Enrolling in Microsoft Authenticator Application for multi-factor authentication](#)

### **Additional Microsoft Authenticator Tip Sheets**

[Frequently Asked Questions for Microsoft Authenticator](#)  
[Troubleshooting issues with Microsoft Authenticator](#)

Colleagues who use multifactor authentication will have several weeks to make the migration, however, we do recommend you do it soon, to allow you time to adjust to the new process prior to Entrust being decommissioned. Both multifactor applications will be required, temporarily, as we complete the transition from Entrust to Microsoft Authenticator. We estimate this period to last one to two months but each application on your device will prompt you to the appropriate application for the authentication type requested.

This is the first of several upgrades planned to Virtua's Remote Access and Password security process. Additional communications will be shared as each phase of go-live draws closer. If you have any questions, please contact the Virtua IT Help Desk at 856-355-1234 for more information.

### **Upcoming Events to Share**

#### **Spread the Word: "Walk with a Virtua Doctor" This Saturday**

Denne (Donee) Thomas-Patterson, MD, of Virtua Primary Care will be walking with the community on Saturday, Oct. 7 from 8:30 to 10:15 a.m. The event will feature a wellness discussion and guided stroll through Croft Farm on Bortons Mill Road in Cherry Hill. Dr. Thomas-Patterson will lead a discussion about healthy living, including fitness, nutrition, stress and more, followed by the wellness walk. We urge you to share this information with your patients and friends. Registration is not needed. Click [here](#) for more information, including address and parking details.

#### **Aging Phenomenally**

The Women's Alliance Network will host an insightful conversation about the keys to aging phenomenally on Oct. 25 at 1 p.m. at the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine, Academic Center (Multipurpose Room). The event will feature keynote speaker Rachel Pruchno, PhD, an endowed chair and professor of medicine in the [Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine](#), and moderator Esther Deblinger, PhD, professor of psychiatry and founding co-director of the [CARES Institute](#) at Rowan Medicine. [Register to secure your spot at this free event](#) (accessible off the Virtua network).

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

October is **Global Diversity Month**, which recognizes various cultures, traditions, and the benefits of diversity. This week, we focus on the topic of [nonverbal communication](#). While there are more than 7,000 recorded languages around the world, it is believed that nonverbal communication makes up about 70% of all human communication. Imagine, only 30% of what you communicate to another person is delivered through words!

Additionally, studies have detected a [correlation](#) between being bilingual and decreasing symptoms related to dementia and cognitive decline.

We also highlight **National Coming Out Day**, celebrated on Oct. 11. Openly identifying as a member of the LGBTQ+ communities can be a privilege—it spans from being a profoundly personal and private journey to a liberating public revelation. Ultimately, it remains an intimately personal decision to make.

With **World Mental Health** Day recognized on Oct. 10, take a moment to explore the insights from the 2023 National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People here: [thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/](https://thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/).