

## **Clinician Update**

### **September 15, 2022**

#### **Save the Date! Proton Therapy: Advancements and Applications**

The Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Cancer Program will be hosting an educational event for community physicians on **Wednesday, Oct. 19 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.** The program will showcase the latest applications in proton therapy treatment. This will be a “hybrid” event, available both in-person at Virtua Voorhees Hospital and online. Onsite attendees will have an opportunity to personally tour the Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Proton Therapy Center at the conclusion of the event.

Program speakers include:

- Catherine Kim, MD, Medical Director, Radiation Oncology, Penn Medicine | Virtua Health
- John N. Lukens, MD, Assistant Professor, Radiation Oncology, Perelman School of Medicine
- Graeme R. Williams, MD, MBA, Radiation Oncology, Penn Medicine | Virtua Health
- James Metz, MD, Chair, Radiation Oncology, Penn Medicine

More details and a registration link will be forthcoming. Questions? Email [VirtuaClinician@virtua.org](mailto:VirtuaClinician@virtua.org).

#### **Q&A with Dr. Martin Topiel**

##### ***New, updated bivalent COVID-19 booster vaccine now available***

##### **What is the new, updated bivalent vaccine?**

Pfizer and Moderna have released updated versions of the COVID-19 booster vaccine. These are designed to 1) provide extra protection to people for whom several months have passed since their last vaccine and 2) provide more specific protection against the specific Omicron subvariants (BA.4 and BA.5) that are most prevalent right now. These subvariants are more contagious and more resistant than earlier strains of omicron, so I am glad the bivalent vaccine is now available.

##### **Who should receive the bivalent vaccine?**

Most people should receive this vaccine. The Pfizer version is available for anyone 12 and older; the Moderna version is available for anyone 18 and older.

This booster specifically protects against the version of the virus that’s widely circulating now, which will likely persist throughout the fall and winter. This is the best way to maintain and enhance your protection.

##### **When should someone get the bivalent vaccine if they recently had COVID-19?**

People who had COVID in recent months likely had BA.4 or BA.5. They should wait at least three months after their initial illness before getting the bivalent booster as they likely have natural antibodies. If you had COVID in early July, for instance, you’d want to get the booster in early October, as your antibody levels would potentially start tapering off.

##### **What is the appropriate time interval between someone’s most recent COVID-19 vaccine and this one?**

Wait at least two months from your last COVID-19 vaccine dose (initial series or booster) before getting the bivalent booster.

Some people, including those who are 65 years or older, may have already had a second booster shot. They are still eligible for the bivalent booster—and therefore should receive it—provided two months or more have passed.

If those who are eligible for the booster act now, it could help us fight against an anticipated fall/winter surge that is predicted for Thanksgiving time!

### **How can clinicians help patients to understand what it means to be "fully vaccinated"?**

The CDC has modified the definition of “fully vaccinated” to try to bring some uniformity and clarity. At this time, “fully vaccinated” means receiving a primary vaccine series *and* the updated bivalent vaccine.

To break this down some more: An adult who received two initial doses of Pfizer would be considered fully vaccinated once they receive the bivalent booster. Any previous booster doses no longer count toward being “fully vaccinated.”

### **Is it possible to skip the primary series?**

No. As of now, the primary series is still required because of its success in protecting against the initial deadly strains of COVID. It's conceivable that this approach may change as more data becomes available, but it was thought best not to tinker with success until there is more evidence.

### **Is the new vaccine safe like the earlier versions?**

The modifications to the vaccines are not felt to impact its safety profile. This is similar to how the influenza vaccine is altered each year to respond to predicted prevalent strains. Each year's flu shot is different than the one that came before it, and that has never been shown to have a detrimental impact on safety or reactions.

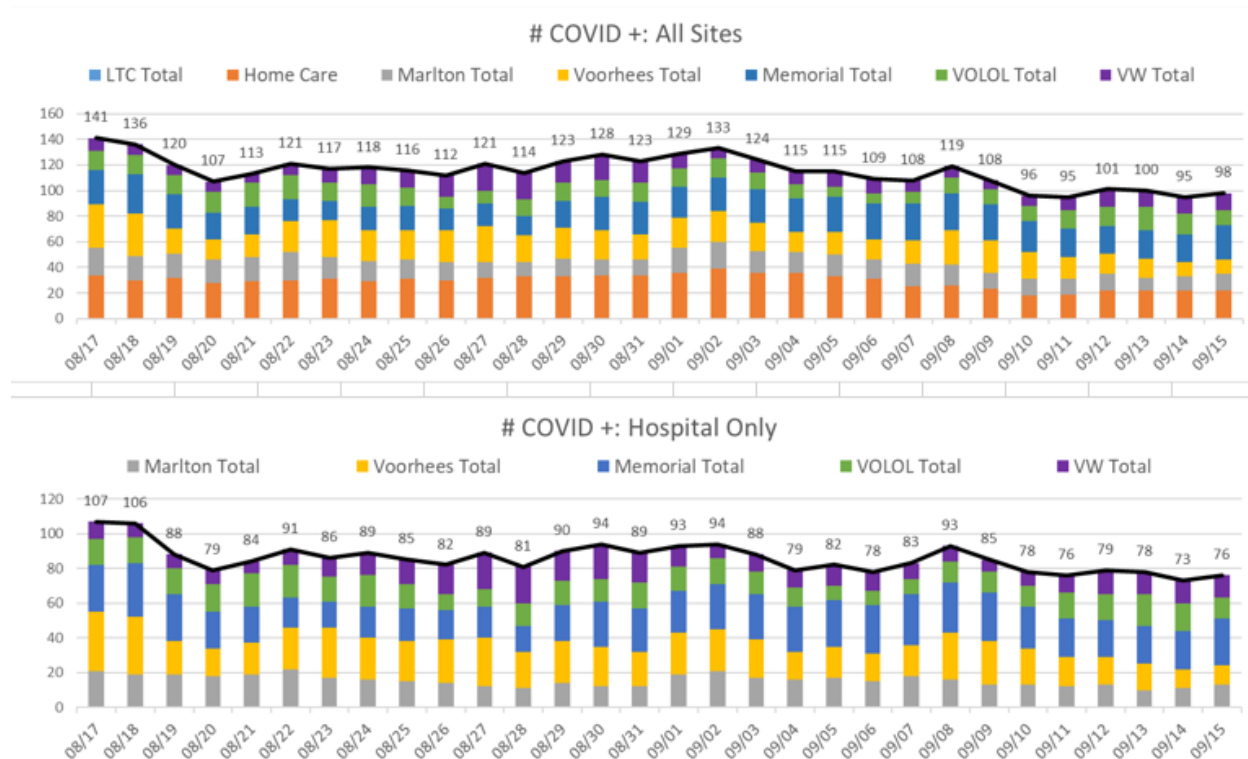
### **Does it matter which type of updated bivalent vaccine an individual receives?**

People ages 18 years and older may get a different product for a booster than they got for their primary series. For instance, someone who initially received an initial series of Moderna could elect to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech bivalent booster.

### **Where can people go to get vaccinated?**

As before, the State of New Jersey's vaccine appointment finder is a useful resource. Bivalent boosters will be increasingly available at national chains (CVS, Walgreens) and local pharmacies in the days and weeks ahead.

## **COVID-19 Census**



**Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts**

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey is currently 0.91.
- The total number of cases reported as of 3 p.m. today:
  - Atlantic County 64,730 cases
  - Burlington County: 102,360 cases
  - Camden County: 124,203 cases
  - Gloucester County: 63,545 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, Gloucester, and Atlantic counties: 4,865.
- The state’s Vaccination Overview dashboard reported 18,625,118 doses of vaccine have been administered.
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**Monkeypox: Latest NJ Resources**

- The total number of cases in New Jersey reported as of today: **643**.
- *Monkeypox vaccination is available for NJ eligible residents at [selected locations](#) by appointment only.*
- For more information, NJDOH has a [demographic dashboard](#) on people infected with monkeypox in the state. Click here for [monkeypox resource information from NJDOH](#).

**Virtua in the News**

- **Virtua Docs Shine in *SJ Mag* Top Docs List** — Congratulations to the 35 Virtua physicians included in *SJ Magazine’s* 2022 Top Docs list. This esteemed group includes Dr. Darius Sholevar of Virtua Heart Rhythm Specialists, who participated in the magazine’s photo shoot at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton. It also includes six doctors—representing six specialties—selected by the readers as part of the “patient poll.” Consult the complete list [here](#).

- **Virtua to Improve Patient Experience During Labor and Delivery** — Virtua Voorhees Hospital is one of three New Jersey hospitals to adopt a national model that improves patient outcomes and experiences during the birthing process. The system, which focuses on shared decision-making and enhanced communication between the care team and patient, is called “TeamBirth.” Read in this week’s *By Design* and [Becker’s Hospital Review](#).
- **‘Miracle Patients’ Reunite, Thank Virtua Staff** — In a recent issue of *By Design*, we shared TV news coverage of a poignant reunion of two former patients and the staff at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. Now, two print publications offer greater details of the men’s incredible journeys and how their care teams helped save their lives. Read in the [Courier-Post](#) and [Patch](#).
- **After a Tornado and COVID, This Virtua Doctor Is Rebuilding His Life** — Physicians help others overcome obstacles, but Virtua cardiologist Dr. Troy Randle found himself coping with three personal calamities over 18 months. As he works to recover, he’s also continuing to see patients. Dr. Randle and wife, Melody, are grateful for the strong support they’ve received from Virtua colleagues. View this touching story in the [Courier-Post](#).
- **Neurosurgeon Op-Ed on Leadership & Humanity** — Patrick Connolly, MD, MBA, FACS, neurosurgery chief at Virtua Health, frequently contributes health articles to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that highlight the human side of medicine. [In this latest article](#), he includes a canine connection as he shares the top five leadership lessons he has learned from his dog, Buddy.
- **Lead Poisoning Remains a Hidden Epidemic** — Maria Emerson, director of rehabilitation services for Virtua’s Pediatric Mobile Services Program, co-authored this piece about the prevalence of lead poisoning in New Jersey communities. The pandemic may also have increased the problem, due to more time spent in homes with lead paint. The [Pediatric Mobile Program](#) provides free blood lead-level screenings and other vital services for children in communities across the region. Read in the [Courier-Post](#) or [Burlington County Times](#).
- **Four Health Systems Retaining Talent with Perks Beyond Pay** — Virtua is among several health systems providing innovative benefits to their workforce. Rhonda Jordan, EVP and chief human resources officer, discusses the organization’s unique “WE Hours” program, which provides eight extra hours of scheduled, paid time off per year for most employees. The initiative gives colleagues “more time to do the things that are important to them—from self-care to community service,” she explains. Read in [Becker’s Hospital Review](#). Rhonda was also a featured guest on the HealthLeaders podcast, where she discussed the evolution of HR and the necessity of women in leadership. Listen on [HealthLeaders](#).
- **Forbes Names Virtua a Best Employer** — Virtua recently made *Forbes*’ prestigious “American’s Best Employers by State” list for the fourth consecutive time. View the list in [Becker’s Hospital Review](#) and [Forbes](#). To learn how Virtua earns this recognition, read [Virtua’s press release](#).

## **XPoNential Music Festival – Special Rate for Health Providers**

**Sept. 16 at 6:30 p.m.: War On Drugs, Patti Smith, and Geese**

All Virtua colleagues are invited to attend the XPoNential Music Festival at the Freedom Mortgage Pavilion in Camden. Since Virtua is an XPN Musicians on Call hospital partner, tomorrow night’s concert for War on Drugs with special guests Patti Smith and Geese has a special rate. **Colleagues pay just a 75 cent per ticket processing charge!** Click here to <https://www.ticketmaster.com/event/02005C8DE8F575A1?did=pprfst> .

## **Run with the Docs! Last Call for This Upcoming Saturday**

It's time to [Run with the Docs!](#) Virtua Voorhees Hospital is the scene of this popular 5K run and 1-mile walk this upcoming **Saturday, September 17**, all to support our programs for families who have experienced [pregnancy and infant loss](#). For more information, click [here](#).

## **2022 Heart Walk Fast Approaching**

**Oct. 22, 8:30 a.m.**

**Riverwinds Community Center**

**1000 Riverwinds Drive, West Deptford**

Virtua is once again sponsor for the American Heart Association's 2022 Southern New Jersey Fall Heart Walk. This year, our very own Dr. Reg Blaber is serving as the chair of the event.

[Registration](#) for the walk is now open. Be sure to select Virtua Health as your participating organization and receive a free tee! T-shirts can be picked up on the day of the event at our Virtua tent. Remember, you can join an existing team or start your own.

**Note:** Virtua colleagues, family members, friends, and neighbors are welcome to walk as part of our Virtua Health group—be sure to invite one and all!

## **Free Car Seat Check Event**

**Sept. 24, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

In celebration of Child Passenger Safety Week, Virtua is offering a free event to help caregivers on how to properly install a car seat. Click to [view the flyer](#).

## **Smoking Cessation Education and Support**

**Oct. 17 and 24, 12 to 1:30 p.m.**

Virtua Health's free two-session educational support group can help your patients stop smoking once and for all. Run by a trained tobacco treatment specialist, these free sessions will help them:

- Learn about the addiction process
- Develop a personal plan to quit smoking
- Get the tools and support you need to stop smoking, including nicotine replacement patches and lozenges, and acupuncture
- Learn how to manage stress and avoid other behavioral triggers

A Microsoft Teams meeting ID will be provided the week prior via email. Click to [view the flyer](#).

## **Important Flu Vaccination Reminder**

Virtua released the [colleague flu vaccination schedule](#) for September. We encourage colleagues to click on the [Colleague Flu Information button](#) on the VINE to view the schedule and get their flu shot.

Flu shots are mandatory for all Virtua colleagues. All colleagues should receive their flu shots by **11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 1**. The last day to submit a medical or religious exemption for approval is **Saturday, Oct. 1**.

Colleagues who receive the flu vaccine at a location other than a Virtua flu clinic (such as a CVS or a VMG primary care practice) and need to provide proof of vaccination can upload this information into Virtua Works as a self-service function. Click to view the [quick reference guide](#) (QRG).

Click to view [frequently asked questions and answers about flu vaccinations](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and share this [flyer](#) with your team members.

**Note:** The flu vaccination schedule, the QRG to submit proof of vaccination, and instructions to apply for medical and religious exemptions can be found on the VINE via the [Colleague Flu Information button](#).

Questions are welcome. Email [flu@virtua.org](mailto:flu@virtua.org) or call 856-761-3900, option 2.