

Clinician Update

September 7, 2023

[Virtua to Receive \\$2 Million for Advanced Organ Transplant Center at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital](#)

Today, U.S. Rep. Donald Norcross announced that Virtua will receive \$2 million in federal funding toward the Advanced Organ Transplant Center at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. Virtua President and CEO Dennis Pullin and transplant nephrologist Anita Mehrotra, MD, participated in a press conference announcing the funding.

In 2022, Virtua Advanced Transplant & Organ Health performed the most kidney, liver, and pancreas transplants in the program's 48-year history. The team performed 82 transplants, a 20% increase from the prior year.

"This growth reflects Virtua's commitment to this program, making sure organ health and transplant services are available close to home," said Pullin. "But this growth of Virtua's transplant program requires an enhanced physical space with more exam rooms and access to state-of-the-art equipment, all possible thanks to Congressman Norcross and this funding. This investment increases access to life-altering transplantation for our patients—and a second chance for a healthy, fulfilling life."

[Virtua Docs Shine in *SJ Mag* Top Docs List](#)

Congratulations to the 34 Virtua physicians included in *SJ Magazine's* 2023 Top Docs list. This esteemed group includes Angel Rodis, MD, of Virtua Pulmonology & Sleep Medicine, who had the opportunity to participate in the magazine's photo shoot at Camden County Boathouse at Cooper River Park, Pennsauken. To compile the list, the magazine surveyed South Jersey physicians to ask them which of their peers they would send a family member to. The issue has an additional "people's choice" list that includes doctors selected by readers as part of the "patient poll." Check out the complete list [here](#).

[Another Ambulatory Surgery Center Joins Virtua Family](#)

Virtua has just welcomed Mercer County Surgery Center (MCSC) to its network of ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs).

"MCSC is a beautiful ASC with tremendous potential and a strong clinical team," said Barry Graf, FACHE, senior vice president of Partnerships and Business Development at Virtua. "It further solidifies our commitment for growth as more musculoskeletal cases move into the ambulatory surgery center space. We appreciate their trust in us as a partner and look forward to growing together."

The new addition joins a network of over 40 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.

Virtua's ASCs provide a safe and convenient alternative to hospital-based outpatient care with a strong track record of positive patient outcomes and satisfaction. All the facilities are state licensed, nationally accredited and Medicare certified, ensuring adherence to the highest quality and safety standards. *Newsweek* recently recognized 14 Virtua ASCs in the top 26 ASCs in New Jersey.

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

LAST CALL: Cardiology for Primary Care – This Saturday, Sept. 9

[Register today for the annual Virtua Cardiology for Primary Care Symposium](#) to take place this Saturday, Sept. 9 **in-person on the campus of Rowan College of Burlington County**, with a live-stream version available. This will be the 13th year Virtua Cardiology has held this event to educate primary care practitioners, physicians, NPs, PAs, and other health professionals on news and trends in cardiovascular care.

For cardiologist Troy Randle, DO, FACOI, FACC, MBA, program chair for the event, this continuing medical education program presents a valuable opportunity for clinicians. "If you're able to make it, I encourage all my fellow clinicians to consider attending," said Dr. Randle. "I promise it will be so worth the time."

A few of this year's topics include sleep and the heart, imaging modalities, a panel discussion on heart failure, and so much more. Check out the many excellent presentations on the agenda. [Learn more and register here](#).

The symposium is part of the Rowan series, "Key Essentials for Optimizing Patient Care," a 5Block CME Series, and is designed specifically to better prepare primary care clinicians for the management of their patients. Questions? Email VirtuaClinician@virtua.org.

Colleague Flu Vaccination Program Begins Next Week

Virtua has released the [flu vaccination schedule](#) available to all colleagues. Help protect our patients, visitors, and yourselves from the flu by getting a flu vaccination.

Flu shots are mandatory for all Virtua colleagues. Virtua will begin offering free flu shots on Sept. 12. **All colleagues should receive their flu shots by 11:59 p.m. on Nov. 7.**

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.

Flu Shots for the Public Now Available at Virtua Health Primary Care Practices

Flu shots are now available at Virtua Health primary care practices.

The [CDC recommends that EVERYONE over age 6 months receives the flu vaccine by the end of October](#), before flu season starts. Children aged 6 months to age 8 who need two doses should receive their first dose as soon as possible and their second dose four weeks later.

COVID-19 Q&A

A late-summer wave of COVID-19 is resurfacing conversations about symptoms, testing, vaccines, and more. In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-related hospitalizations increased nationwide by 24% in the first half of August. While this uptick is relatively small and most people experience only mild symptoms, Virtua's Dr. Martin Topiel, chief infection control officer, offers the following guidance to help us through the fall.

Has Virtua seen an uptick in COVID cases recently?

Yes. I would not use the word "surge," but after many months of our lowest COVID numbers since the start of the pandemic, recent weeks have brought about an increase in cases—among our patients and our workforce.

What symptoms are most common?

Fortunately, most people are reporting mild cases, with symptoms that resemble flu-like illness, a cold, or allergies. Coughing, a sore throat, headaches, and congestion are all common. For this reason, people should not shrug off these symptoms. Take a test and, if it's COVID, isolate yourself to help protect others. You may need to take home tests on two successive days for best accuracy. If you remain uncertain, you should get a PCR test at a drug store or urgent care.

What are best practices for protecting our fellow colleagues?

It may be a good idea during these upticks to wear a mask when in clinical areas. Because we work in close proximity to one another, it is easy for someone to unknowingly and inadvertently spread COVID to his or her teammates from a recent exposure. We should also test ourselves if we experience the above symptoms and call out when sick. If tests are initially negative but you feel unwell, please wear a mask while at work and test again the next day before coming to work.

What should someone do if they have more severe symptoms?

Virtua offers a great telehealth urgent care program. I recommend it because you can speak to a provider without having to leave home (and possibly spread the virus to others). As always, our emergency departments are prepared to help those who need a heightened level of care.

Can you remind us of the "call out" process if we test positive for COVID?

If a COVID test is positive, the colleague must call out sick and report their positive result using the online reporting tool available on Colleague Corner or virtua.org/employee. The "Return-to-Work" team will contact you with instructions and specifics, but anticipate staying out at least five days from the start of symptoms.

Will this uptick continue into the fall?

The start of the school year will bring together lots of people in close contact. As we have seen time and time again, this virus continues to evolve and continues to stick with us. We are seeing new variants develop that may impact transmission. While things are much better now than they were a year ago, we should all stay proactive and vigilant about our health.

What are the latest recommendations regarding vaccines?

We are in a difficult situation right now as the FDA is finalizing its approach to a new updated bivalent vaccine, hopefully for October. Prior to that, if you are in the window where you haven't received a vaccine in at least six months, fall into the category of vulnerability, and anticipate greater potential risk (frequent travel, immunocompromised loved ones), it may be thoughtful to receive an updated vaccine.

Practicing Excellence at Virtua – Clinician Feedback on Explaining Care

Thank you for your commitment to Practicing Excellence and the Patient Experience journey. This week, we invite you to focus on the invaluable insights provided in the [Week 23 and 24 guides](#).

Topics include *Sending Home*, *Knowing Your Flow*, *Discharge*, *Finishing Strong*, and *Conveying Compassion*.

As for the skill of *Explaining Care*, infectious disease physician Mashiul Chowdhury, MD, had this feedback:

“Practicing medicine is so rewarding and a privilege. It enables me to be in touch with others, with their sufferings, and pain. I put myself in their shoes. I think of the fragility and vulnerability of a human being and that makes me more human. I also think of the power in healing. Most important is confidence, enabling the patient to have confidence in you. The simple assuredness through simple conversation matters tremendously. It must be with empathy and it makes a total difference in a patient's life. I always try to do that by being very direct, very honest, and very open.”

It is no surprise that in explaining care, positively addressing fear is a common reference among our clinician reviews. Note the following recent examples, and the clinician referenced:

- “He was caring and very thorough with his exam. He took my fears away and I would recommend him highly.” (Eduard Koman, MD)
- “They made sure I felt comfortable during my entire visit. I felt like Dr. Gross really cared about my concerns and listened carefully.” (Shanin Gross, DO)
- “She put all my fears to rest concerning my hernia surgery. Very pleasant and knowledgeable.” (Kathleen Coakley, DO)
- “He has great communication skills and doesn't make you worry.” (Jason Breig, MD)

- “I was nervous about having the gastric sleeve, but Dr. A was there every step of the way. I appreciate his honesty and the time he takes with his patients. Thank you, Dr. A!” (Emeka Acholonu, MD)
- “He made me feel very comfortable going forward with my surgery and eased all my fears and concerns.” (Craig Zaretsky, MD)
- “Great doctor. My first meeting he came right in the room and put my mind at ease.” (Gary Levin, MD)
- “I was very nervous and scared. Thank you, Dr. Galler, for doing such an amazing job with me.” (Avi Galler, MD)

We are nearing the end of our Patient Experience journey. While our first program is coming to a close, our Practicing Excellence journey is ongoing. In fact, practicing excellence—the action itself—is part of our DNA at Virtua. It’s part of our Culture of WE and integral to our experience framework: WE always SEE good, together (Safety, Excellence, Empathy).

Below is a brief Q&A as to how we will conclude this chapter of Practicing Excellence together. Next week’s issue will look ahead further to how we will celebrate our collective achievement and prepare for the next program in the series.

Q: When will we wrap the Patient Experience program?

A: All colleagues following the 26-week Patient Experience program will watch and discuss their final tip—and earn their Patient Experience badge—the week of Monday, Sept. 25. Any colleague who has not maintained the one-tip-per-week pace can use this month to catch up.

Q: How can I check if I am up to date with the Patient Experience program?

A: When you open the app or [visit the website](#), select “Progress” from the main menu. Then, select the Patient Experience program. Note: The full program name is based on the learning track you enrolled in in the spring. For instance, it may read “Ambulatory Clinical Staff PX” or “Acute Care Nursing PX” or “Emergency Medicine PX.” You will see a percent sign next to the program name that indicates your progress so far.

Q: What if I never enrolled in a Patient Experience program?

A: That is easy to fix. Click [here](#) for enrollment instructions. All tips you have previously watched will be counted toward the program.

Q: How do I earn credit for tips I watched in a group setting?

A: Below each tip is the message “Already watched this video? Tap here.” Tap the button to have the video counted toward your progress.

Q: Am I expected to complete other programs I am enrolled in, such as the Virtua Health Welcome Program?

A: You are welcome to watch as many tips as you like in any order you like, including those in other programs. For the sake of togetherness, we ask that you complete the Patient Experience program by the week of Sept. 25.

Again, next week we will share details of what you can look forward to beyond the inaugural program. Your experiences inspire us to continuously improve and provide the best care possible. We welcome your feedback as we share the Practicing Excellence journey. Email your thoughts to VirtuaClinician@virtua.org.

Building a Career, Raising Kids, and Renovating a Home

Aimee Wills initially joined Virtua as a member of the Environmental Services team, which provided first-hand insights about patient safety, infection control, and the inner workings of a hospital. Now, as a radiologic technologist, she applies those same lessons to ensure her patients have outstanding experiences. Get to know Aimee in [this episode](#) of "Here for Good: Inside Edition" and discover how she first met our host, President and CEO Dennis Pullin.

Upcoming Events

“Teal” Talk for GYN Cancer Awareness

It’s time to coordinate our wardrobes and raise awareness for cancer prevention. We’re wearing teal to bring attention to gynecologic cancer, especially ovarian cancer. There is no screening for ovarian cancer, and the symptoms such as bloating, abdominal pain, and feeling full can be easily overlooked.

On Friday, Sept. 22, please wear teal to help us raise awareness about the importance of annual GYN exams and the symptoms of ovarian cancer. Take a photo dressed in teal and post it in our Colleague Facebook page or send it to hellogood@virtua.org to be included in Virtua’s news and social media channels.

Haddon Avenue Street Festival Saturday, Sept. 23 (rain date on Sept. 30)

Virtua is once again proud to support the 2023 Haddon Avenue Street Festival, to take place on Saturday, Sept. 23 (rain date on Sept. 30). Presented by Parkside Business & Community in Partnership (PBCIP), the free annual event features musical performances, giveaways, social services, and family fun.

The street festival lines Haddon Avenue just a few blocks north of Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital between Kaighn Avenue and Mechanic Streets. There will be food, clothing, jewelry, music, and art, as well as a kid’s fun zone with moon bounce, video game truck, pop-up basketball games, face painting, and a children's book festival. Virtua’s Community Health Engagement colleagues will be on hand with

health screenings and wellness education, seated chair massages, as well as with exhibits from Virtua Home Health and Virtua Heart Failure. To learn more, click [here](#).

IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity for All

Jewish High Holy Days

September brings the most important days of the Jewish calendar. Rosh Hashanah, which runs from sunset Friday, Sept. 15 to sunset Sunday, Sept. 17, celebrates the beginning of the new year on the Hebrew lunar calendar. It begins a period of time when Jews take stock of their lives and is marked by the blowing of the ram's horn, or shofar. The High Holy Days conclude with Yom Kippur, which begins at sundown on Sunday, Sept. 24 and concludes at sundown on Monday, Sept. 25. Known as the "Day of Atonement," it is the most important day of the Jewish calendar. It is a day of fasting, prayer, reflection, and requests for forgiveness.

BAACC Colleague Connect

The Black and African American Colleague Community (BAACC) invite you to join Virtua leaders at the Be Well Bistro at 303 Lippincott Drive, Marlton, on Sept. 27, 5 to 6:30 p.m. They will discuss their own career journeys, ways to tap into educational and growth opportunities, and tips for successfully navigating the organization. Register now: [BAACC Colleague Connect](#)