

# COVID-19 Clinician Update

## Tuesday, June 2

### A Defining Moment

Yesterday Virtua President & CEO Dennis Pullin shared a message with colleagues, responding to the extraordinary and distressing recent events concerning the death of George Floyd. While some of our clinicians may have directly received the letter, we wanted to be certain everyone had the opportunity to read this powerful and heartfelt message from our most senior leader:

Dear Colleagues,

This past week has been deeply troubling to me. As a human being, I find it gut wrenching to process the senseless killing of George Floyd and all those who came before him. As a person of color and citizen of the United States of America, I find it unbearable to watch this ugly history repeat itself again and again in the land of the free and home of the brave.

There is nothing brave about racism. Nothing free about living in fear because of the color of your skin or some other aspect of yourself that society deems unworthy.

While we stand together actively fighting an invisible yet insidious virus called COVID-19, a more dangerous societal virus that has been woven into the fabric of our communities, institutions and economy silently eats away at the tenets of our humanity.

Racism, hatred and discrimination run counter to the great American dream. What we should all recognize by now is our interconnectivity. What affects one of us, affects all of us.

Over the weekend, we witnessed many peaceful demonstrations, calls for solidarity between police departments and protestors, and influential leaders giving eloquent voice to the pain inflicted on our community. We also saw reprehensible violence, disgraceful looting, and civil unrest.

Our country, our neighbors are hurting — from the pandemic, economic hardship, and intolerable hatred. It is a particularly trying time for our minority communities. They are crying out in frustration for a way forward, to be seen and valued as human beings.

My mother always encouraged me to be better than today. Her advice still rings true for me. We have got to be better, to do better, to open our hearts and minds and embrace the differences around us. I liken it to travelling to a new or exotic part of the country. We readily immerse ourselves in the sights and sounds. We enjoy the people, the culture, the food and the rich, intriguing history. Why not adapt this travel-like approach in our own settings, seeking more awareness and understanding of those around us, appreciating those differences which make each person unique.

Here at Virtua Health, we are our own community, dare I say, even a family of 14,000+ amazing individuals. Through our collective development of our “Culture of We,” we profess to value all roles and unique perspectives and contributions. We work to create

a safe environment that gives everyone a voice. In the end, it always comes down to us, the people, and how engaged we are. We simply cannot stand up for something while sitting idly by on the sidelines.

Humanity is an action. We must continue to be deeply committed to creating a more inclusive, more diverse, more respectful and more caring culture than ever before.

I'd like to think that a world with less judgement and more understanding is a collective and worthy cause. I humbly ask you, my colleagues, to be proactive in this cause, more than just empathetic. We must find the courage to speak up when we hear a disparaging or disrespectful comment, or if we witness someone being judged or excluded.

If we wish to work in an organization where everyone knows they matter, we must take responsibility for creating that environment of inclusion and equality.

We must become aware of our own biases and work to grow a more diverse circle of friends and colleagues to broaden our understanding of different viewpoints.

When I came to Virtua Health, it was my intention to bring everyone together to serve this entire community with an undeniable philosophy that signaled, "We are here for you, here for good." That notion of being here for good weighs heavy on my heart.

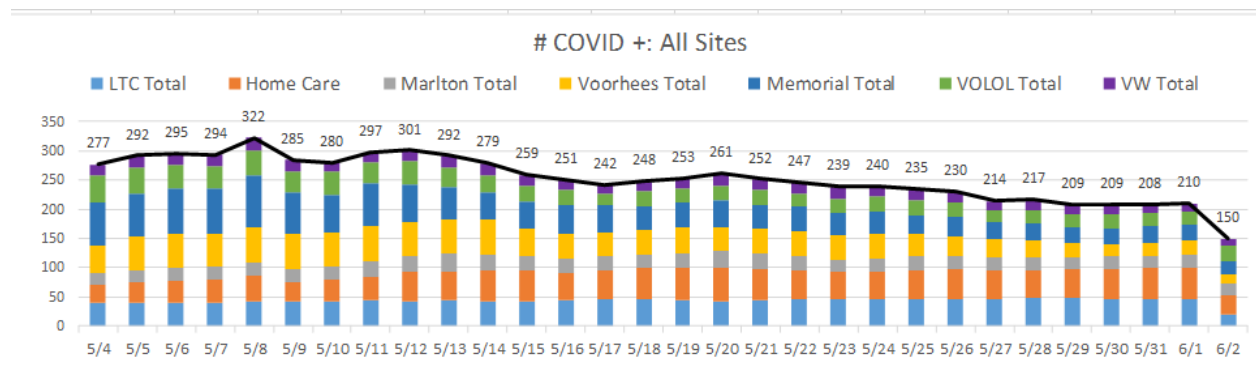
In the wake of recent events, I now find myself asking: *Are we doing enough to expand the conversation around the disparities in health care? Are we widening our lens so that we truly see everyone? Are we doing better in a manner that would make my mom proud?*

It is my sincere hope that we emerge from this current state as a new nation — one where we embrace those who may not look, act, speak or think exactly the way we do.

Dennis

### By the Numbers

The following chart reflects the latest figures for Virtua-site cases of COVID-19.



Locally, in the tri-county area, there have been a total of 784 deaths, as of 1 p.m. today. The total number of cases are as follows:

- Burlington County 4,680
- Camden County 6,603
- Gloucester County 2,262

### **Telehealth Visit Best Practices for Caregivers and Older Adults**

There is no doubt that the accelerated use of telemedicine is one of the major social changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtually overnight, patients and physicians have had to acclimate to this tool that has served to mitigate the challenges of social distancing in healthcare settings.

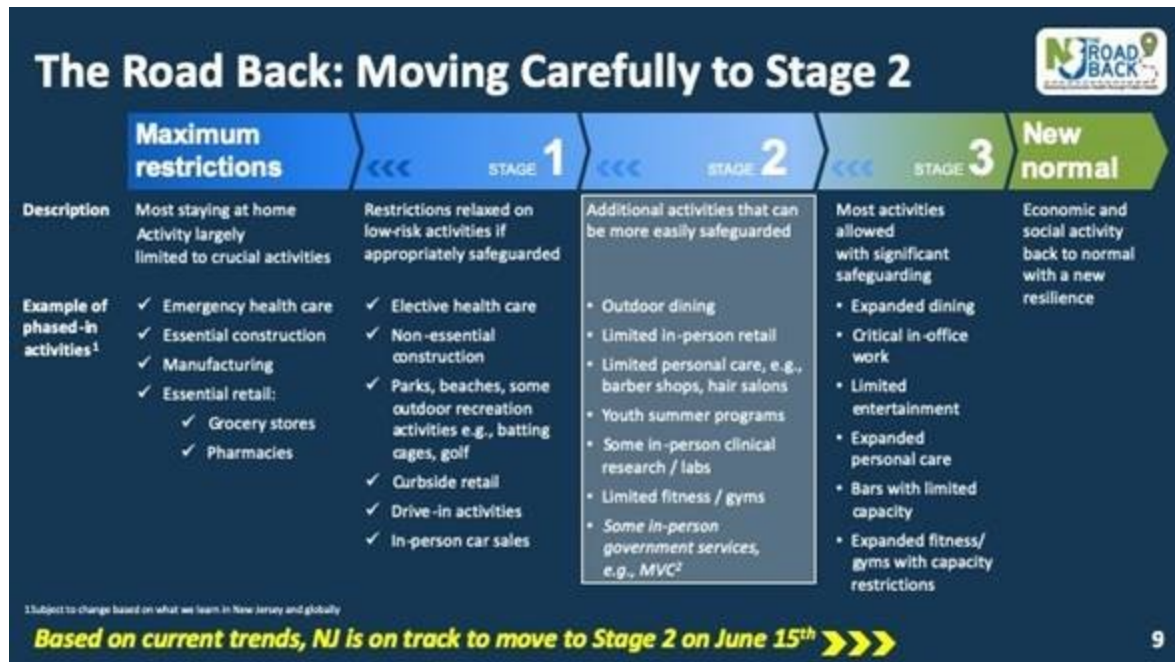
VMG family physician and NJ Healthcare Quality Institute Board Member Mary Campagnolo, MD, MBA, recently provided her perspective and insight as part of a webinar series developed by AARP New Jersey and NJHQI. The topic, “Telehealth Visit Best Practices for Caregivers and Older Adults,” was attended by several hundred individuals online and provides important tips for making the most of a telehealth visit. The recording can be found [here](#).

### **The “Road Back” Plan**

In an update provided yesterday by NJHA, it was reported that the state now leads the nation in daily testing per capita, which is a key component of the Governor’s Road Back Plan for resumption of services in the state.

In Executive Order 149, Governor Phil Murphy outlined the plan for resumption of childcare services on June 15, providing guidance by the [Department of Children and Families](#) that includes daily screening of children and staff, limitations on group sizes, masking policies, and enhanced cleaning and sanitation practices.

In addition to childcare services, outdoor dining and non-essential, in-person retail business can resume on June 15, with salons and barbershops opening June 22. Gyms and health clubs are expected to soon follow. The New Jersey Department of Health will issue guidance for all resumptions.



## Coping with Violence in Our Community

While we have witnessed many peaceful demonstrations in recent days, we have unfortunately also seen violence and rioting in our region, especially in nearby Philadelphia. When this takes place in our community, it is especially upsetting, eliciting reactions of fear, anger, sadness, and disbelief. These anxieties are often escalated when simultaneously struggling with pandemic-related stressors. Persons already feeling overwhelmed may struggle to manage heightened levels of uncertainty and hopelessness.

Virtua is here for you and is deeply committed to creating a safe, caring, and inclusive environment for our colleagues and clinicians. We encourage you to read this helpful article, [Coping with Violence and Rioting in Your Community](#). We know these are challenging times and our partner, Carebridge is available 24/7 to provide counseling support to those seeking emotional support. For immediate assistance, please call 800-437-0911.

## Happy Community Health Improvement Week

Community Health Improvement Week, **June 1-5**, celebrates people coming together to create healthier communities. And that's never been more important than now.

Throughout this pandemic, we've seen endless acts of bravery, care, kindness, and support. Neighbors, police, EMS, and firefighters cheering on health care workers as they begin their shifts. Restaurants providing our hospitals with free meals. Donations arriving to local food banks. Colleagues delivering groceries to the elderly. Hearts and lights in windows. Buildings turned blue. Inspirational messages on sidewalks.

During Community Health Improvement Week, and every week, we honor our dedicated colleagues and everyone in our communities who are making a positive difference and taking care of each other, and keeping one another safe during these challenging times.

## How to Deal with Burnout During a Pandemic

If you are feeling exhausted these days, you are not alone. When stressful stimuli outpace our chances to recover, it can lead to burnout. The feeling of exhaustion, being unable to focus or finish anything, and experiencing physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches are all classic symptoms of burnout.

There are many ways to recover your energy and everyone will need something different to support his or her recovery. We invite you to try some of the tips provided below from Elizabeth Walker-Graham, director of Community Based Health Management and Behavioral Health Psychotherapy Programs at Virtua.

- **Get to know yourself:** None of us has ever encountered a global pandemic like COVID-19 or negotiated indefinite stay-at-home orders, which means we are discovering our unique responses to this situation for the first time. Cultivate a little self-awareness to figure out what you need. Have some self-compassion: Being hard on yourself is its own stress, so try to notice where perfectionism and overachieving may be adding to your load. Give yourself extra grace and space for thoughts and emotions. Mistakes are inevitable right now. Let yourself learn from them instead of berating yourself.
- **Try to prioritize rest and mindfulness practices:** Take breaks regularly throughout the day to build resilience. These can be brief. Taking a deep breath is a way of letting your nervous system know that it is okay to calm down.
- **Limit media and social media:** The urge to binge during this time is normal. Our brains are desperate to understand what is going on. Yet endless reading about the pandemic can compound the effects of burn out.
- **Incorporate movement into your day:** Take a walk. Do some yoga. You do not have to do a full workout to get the benefits of movement.
- **Thoughtfully connect with – and disconnect – from others:** Social distancing makes it challenging to connect in person. We are wired for in-person connection, and our brains do not respond well to digital encounters as in-person ones. Connecting spiritually and looking for conversation sources and wisdom that will support us getting more connected to ourselves. Additionally, if you have loved ones who tend to drain you or friends who need to talk about the virus while you need to talk about something else, give yourself permission to set boundaries and take some space. It is OK to protect yourself and your inner resources right now.

For additional wellness resources and support options, click [here](#).