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1. VHHA in Action

Each day, VHHA actively works on behalf of its members, their employees, and Virginians to advance the interests of Virginia's hospitals and health care systems. In the past week, here are some developments of interest to Virginia hospitals and health systems:

- This week, VHHA hosted a webinar about a state law change made this year by the **Virginia General Assembly** to require each hospital with an emergency department to establish a security plan for the emergency department. That requirement includes a provision calling for at least one off-duty law-enforcement officer or trained security personnel to be present in the ED at all times as deemed necessary and appropriate based on a security risk assessment. During the webinar, VHHA staff and a representative from the **Hancock Daniel** health care law firm shared information, addressed questions related to the new law, and discussed steps Virginia hospitals can take to ensure compliance.
- An in-person meeting of the **Payor Advisory Committee** was held this week at VHHA offices. The Committee is a forum for hospital payor relations and revenue cycle leaders to discuss priority issues and ongoing payor-related challenges.
- The **U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency** (CISA) and the **UK National Cyber Security Centre** (NCSC) recently announced the release of [Guidelines for Secure AI System Development](#). Supported by 23 domestic and international cybersecurity organizations, the publication marks a significant step in addressing the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure. The guidelines, which complement the [U.S. Voluntary Commitments on Ensuring Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy AI](#), provide key recommendations for AI system development and emphasize the importance of adhering to [Secure by Design](#) principles. The approach prioritizes ownership of security outcomes for customers, embraces radical transparency and accountability, and establishes organizational structures

where secure design is a top priority. The guidelines apply to all types of AI systems, not just frontier models and provide suggestions and mitigations to help data scientists, developers, managers, decision-makers, and risk owners make informed decisions about the secure design, model development, system development, deployment, and operation of their machine learning AI systems. Read more [here](#).

- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) recently [issued a drug safety communication](#) warning that certain anti-seizure medicines such as levetiracetam (Keppra, Keppra XR, Elepsia XR, and Spritam) and clobazam (Onfi and Sympazan), can cause a rare but serious reaction that can be life-threatening if not diagnosed and treated. The condition, drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms, may start as a rash, but can quickly progress, resulting in injury to internal organs, the need for hospitalization, and even death. As a result, the agency is requiring warnings about this risk to be added to the [prescribing information](#) and patient [medication guides](#) for these medicines.
- Developed by **Eileen L. Dohmann**, MBA, BSN, RN, and **Patti Lisk**, DACCE, BSN, RN, the “Earn While You Learn Clinical Education Model” (EWL CEM) is a transformative nurse clinical education model where Academic/Clinical Partnerships enhance students’ confidence, clinical judgment, and skills acquisition, preparing a more practice-ready nurse graduate for employment. EWL CEM accelerates the development of practice-ready nurse graduates, creates a hiring pipeline for hospitals and reduces orientation costs. The nursing students participating in the EWL CEM work part-time at the clinical facility (12-20 hours per week, when school is in session), receive immersive 12-hour clinical rotations, and work one-on-one with an experienced RN Mentor (preceptor) while receiving a stipend and engaging in regular mentoring meetings to consolidate learning. Access the toolkit [here](#).
- The FDA is informing consumers, health care providers, and health care facilities that the agency is evaluating the potential for device failures (such as leaks, breakage, and other problems) with plastic syringes manufactured in China. The FDA is collecting and analyzing data to evaluate plastic syringes made in China used for injecting fluids into, or withdrawing fluids from, the body. At this time, the issue does not include glass syringes, pre-filled syringes, or syringes used for oral or topical purposes. The FDA received information about quality issues associated with several Chinese manufacturers of syringes. The agency is concerned that certain syringes manufactured in China may not provide consistent and adequate quality or performance. Read more [here](#).
- The holiday season is a time to be thankful for our blessings. Here at VHHA, we are grateful for the dedicated caregivers and health care professionals who work in hospitals across Virginia to help keep people healthy. VHHA recently shared its 2023 video holiday card. The video is a lighthearted short featuring VHHA staff frolicking in an animated winter wonderland. It is our way of sharing a message of seasonal good cheer to members of the Virginia hospital community and so many other folks across Virginia. We wish everyone a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season and a prosperous New Year. View the 2023 video holiday card [here](#).
- VHHA actively engages with the news media to share public messaging and coordinate member media appearances to showcase the important work done by Virginia hospitals. That includes recent coverage from the [Virginia Mercury](#).

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2. View Recording of Quarterly Public Health Webinar Hosted by VHHA in Collaboration with VDH

This month, VHHA hosted an installment of its quarterly public health webinar series for Virginia hospitals and health systems featuring updates provided by **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** officials. Topics covered in this ongoing webinar series may include disease surveillance, modeling, influenza, RSV, and unique pathogens. Additional topics may vary depending on current events. View a recording of the Dec. 6 webinar and presentation slides [here](#) and [here](#). To this point, the webinar series has been hosted on the Go To Webinar platform. Future webinars scheduled for March 6 and June 5 will be hosted on Microsoft Teams. A registration link for those sessions will be e-mailed in January 2024 to all those currently registered for the webinar series. The current registration link can be accessed [here](#).

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3. Scholarships Available for 2024 Virginia Nurse Leadership Academy

The **Virginia Nurses Association (VNA)** has 15 grant-supported nursing scholarship opportunities available for participants in the 2024 Virginia Nurse Leadership Academy. The program, which is presented by the Virginia Nurses Foundation with scholarship support from VDH, is accepting 35 total fellows. This is the second year for the Academy, which has already graduated more than 30 accomplished fellows. Read more about the program and apply through this [link](#). The application deadline is Jan. 5.

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4. U.S. House Approves Legislation on Price Transparency, 340B Reporting, Site Neutral Payments

This week, the **U.S. House of Representatives** passed the *Lower Costs More Transparency Act* ([H.R. 5378](#)) under suspension of the rules with a 320-71 vote (41 representatives were recorded as not voting). The legislation next heads to **the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions** chaired by **Senator Bernie Sanders** of Vermont. Provisions of the legislation about which VHHA expressed concerns to members of Virginia's congressional delegation include:

- Section 101 that would codify the Hospital Transparency Rule that went into effect in January 2021. While VHHA supports efforts to improve health care transparency, this section would no longer recognize price estimator tools as a method to meet the shoppable services requirement.
- Section 202 to require entities participating in the 340B Drug Pricing Program to report the difference between their acquisition cost and payments from Medicaid managed care organizations. Such reporting would not only overstate how much 340B hospitals save from the program for Medicaid beneficiaries but would also be unnecessarily burdensome.
- Section 203 that which would implement harmful site-neutral payment cuts for the administration of drug services furnished in off-campus provider-based departments.
- Section 204 that would require each off-campus hospital outpatient department to be assigned a separate unique health identifier from its provider.

The legislation also contains provisions (Section 303) to extend by two years the deadline for a payment reduction to Medicaid disproportionate share hospitals now scheduled to occur on Jan. 19, 2024. VHHA will continue its engagement with members of Virginia's congressional delegation regarding concerns about this legislation during upcoming visits to Washington, D.C.

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5. HHS Issues Concept Paper on Health Care Cybersecurity Strategy

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) recently issued a [concept paper](#) that outlines its cybersecurity strategy for the health care sector. The concept paper builds on the [National Cybersecurity Strategy](#) that **U.S. President Joe Biden** previously released, focusing specifically on strengthening resilience for hospitals, patients, and communities threatened by cyber-attacks. The paper details four pillars for action, including publishing new voluntary health care-specific cybersecurity performance goals, working with Congress to develop supports and incentives for domestic hospitals to improve cybersecurity, and increasing accountability and coordination within the health care sector. According to the **HHS Office for Civil Rights** (OCR), cyber incidents in health care are on the rise. From 2018-2022, there has been a 93 percent increase in large breaches reported to OCR (369 to 712), with a 278 percent increase in large breaches involving ransomware. Cyber incidents affecting hospitals and health systems have led to extended care disruptions, patient diversions to other facilities, and delayed medical procedures, all putting patient safety at risk. Read more [here](#).

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6. VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Fauquier Health Patient Living with Parkinson's

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features an interview with **Frankie Stamps**, a **Fauquier Health** patient, for a conversation about how physical and speech therapy, an active lifestyle that includes pickleball and skydiving, and medication have helped him manage Parkinson's disease for a decade. Listen to the episode [here](#) and hear past episodes through this [link](#). Podcast episodes are also available through these podcast apps and networks: [Apple Podcast](#), [Amazon Music](#), [Spotify](#), [Pandora](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Stitcher](#), [TuneIn](#), [SoundCloud](#), [Blubrry](#), [iHeart Radio](#), [Deezer](#), [Podbay](#), [Overcast](#), [Pocket Casts](#), the [Virginia Audio Collective](#), the [Public Health Podcast Network](#), the [World Podcast Network](#), and the [Family Podcast Network](#). The podcast can also be heard on the radio airwaves – episodes air each Saturday at noon and Sunday at 10 a.m. on 100.5 FM, 107.7 FM, 92.7 FM, and 820 AM across Central Virginia and 1650 AM in Hampton Roads, and Wednesdays at 1 p.m. on 93.9 FM in Richmond. Send questions, comments, feedback, or guest suggestions to pcfpodcast@vhha.com. – Will Selden

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7. FDA Approves First Gene Therapies for Treatment of Sickle Cell Disease

The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) recently approved two treatments, Casgevy and Lyfgenia, as the first cell-based gene therapies for the treatment of sickle cell disease (SCD) in patients 12 and older. Casgevy is also the first FDA-approved treatment to utilize a type of novel genome editing technology, signaling innovative advancement in the field of gene therapy. Sickle cell disease is a group of inherited blood disorders affecting approximately 100,000 people in the U.S. It is most common in African Americans and, while less prevalent, also affects Hispanic Americans. The primary problem in sickle cell disease is a mutation in hemoglobin, a protein found in red blood cells that delivers oxygen to the body's tissues. This mutation causes red blood cells to develop a crescent or "sickle" shape. These sickled red blood cells restrict the flow in blood vessels and limit oxygen delivery to the body's tissues, leading to severe pain and organ damage called vaso-occlusive events (VOEs) or vaso-occlusive crises (VOCs). The recurrence of these events or crises can lead to life-threatening disabilities or early death. Read more [here](#).

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8. Registration Open for 2024 Regional Human Trafficking Summit (Feb. 7-8) in Richmond

Registration is now open for the fourth annual Regional Human Trafficking Summit hosted by the **Regional Interdisciplinary Collaborative Working to Disrupt Human Trafficking (RIC)**, a multi-state non-profit group that brings together academics, advocates, caregivers, clinicians, law enforcement, survivors, and other stakeholders who are working to end human trafficking. The theme of the Summit, which is scheduled for Feb. 7-8, 2024 at the **VCU School of Medicine**, is “Expanding Community Partnerships to Address Human Trafficking.” Registration is available through this [link](#) (the early bird rate ends Jan. 5, 2024) and information about sponsorship opportunities is available [here](#).

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9. VDH to Host Several Sessions on Mpox Training for Providers in Early 2024

The **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** is hosting a series of educational training sessions for health care providers regarding updated information and lessons learned from the 2022-2023 Mpox outbreak. The sessions will highlight the epidemiology of the outbreak and the risk of reemergence, prevention and control strategies, and vaccination and communication strategies. Four sessions are scheduled, and each will be held from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on the following dates and locations: Fairfax VDOT on Jan. 23, Double Tree Hotel Charlottesville on Jan. 31, Wytheville Community College on Feb. 8, and the Hyatt Place Chesapeake on Feb. 14. Information about continuing education credit available to participants can be viewed online [here](#). Registration is required through this [link](#).

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10. Around the State

Congratulations to **Dr. Victor Agbeibor**, Director of the **Bon Secours St. Francis Family Medicine Residency Program**; **Amy Sampson**, President and CEO of **Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters** and a member of the **VHHA Board of Directors**; and **Becky Sawyer**, Executive Vice President and Chief People Officer for **Sentara Health**; on being named to the *Virginia Business* magazine 100 People to Meet in 2024 [list](#).

Dr. Howard Goodkin, MD, PhD, the Shure Professor of Neurology and Pediatrics, Chair of the Department of Neurology, and Director of the Division of Pediatric Neurology at **UVA Health**, has been elected as the First Vice President of the **American Epilepsy Society**. Read more [here](#).

The Stravitz-Sanyal Institute for Liver Disease and Metabolic Health at **VCU Health** has named **Dr. Saul J. Karpn**, MD, PhD, as its first Chief Scientific Officer (CSO). He will also serve as a professor in the **VCU School of Medicine** and have an adjunct appointment in pediatrics at the **Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU**. Read more [here](#). – Salinna Lor

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