

FYI Weekly

HEALTH CARE NEWS FOR VIRGINIA'S HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

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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:

- VHHA held a weekly legislative briefing call for its **Board of Directors** and convened a meeting of the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Advocacy Committee** (VHHAC) for discussions about pending legislation, policy, and budgetary issues before the **Virginia General Assembly**.
- The **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services** (CMS) recently issued a final rule regarding changes to how states calculate the hospital-specific cap for Medicaid disproportionate share hospitals (DSH). The final rule includes changes to the calculation under the Consolidations Appropriations Act of 2021 and clarifies the timing and availability of certain data, methodology, and technical requirements in the proposed rule. Read more [here](#).
- The **Virginia Department of Health** (VDH) has provided updated information about funding available to health care providers through the [Nurse Preceptor Incentive Program](#). Hospital team members who serve as preceptors may be eligible to apply for available funding in addition to any incremental salary/rate that may be provided to those serving as a preceptor. Expansion of the program was a key workforce legislative agenda item for 2024, resulting in increased funding available in the state fiscal year 2024 budget as well as updated language allowing preceptors for RNs to be eligible for the programs. Preceptors may apply on a rolling basis. Program questions may be directed to olivette.burroughs@vdh.virginia.gov or (804) 864-7431.
- **CommerceHealthcare**®, a **VHHA Solutions** endorsed partner, has released its 2024 Healthcare Finance Trends, an annual report that presents a set of themes that capture the positive momentum, significant challenges, and major strategies for provider organizations in 2024 and

beyond. The themes explore four areas: finance, patient financial experience, automation, and advanced technology and collaboration/trust as strategic context. The trends identified reflect the analysis of a broad spectrum of industry data and perspectives. View the report [here](#).

- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) recently approved Xolair (omalizumab) injections for immunoglobulin E-mediated food allergy in certain adults and children 1 year or older for the reduction of allergic reactions (Type I), including reducing the risk of anaphylaxis, that may occur with accidental exposure to one or more foods. Patients who take Xolair must continue to avoid foods they are allergic to. Xolair is intended for repeated use to reduce the risk of allergic reactions and is not approved for the immediate emergency treatment of allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis. Xolair was originally approved in 2003 for the treatment of moderate to severe persistent allergic asthma in certain patients. Xolair is also approved to treat chronic spontaneous urticaria and chronic rhinosinusitis with nasal polyps in certain patients. Read more [here](#).
- The FDA recently withdrew approval of Pepaxto (melphalan flufenamide), which was approved for use in combination with dexamethasone to treat certain patients with multiple myeloma. The agency determined the following grounds for withdrawal were met: the confirmatory study conducted as a condition of accelerated approval did not confirm Pepaxto's clinical benefit, and the available evidence demonstrates that Pepaxto is not shown to be safe or effective under its conditions of use. This is the first time FDA has used the amended procedures for withdrawal of accelerated approval that were enacted in 2023, as part of the Food and Drug Omnibus Report Act of 2022 (FDORA). Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
- The **National Institute of Standards and Technology** (NIST) recently issued [updated guidance](#) for HIPAA-covered organizations to assist them in assessing and managing cybersecurity risks to electronic protected health information and comply with the HIPAA security rule. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights collaborated with NIST on the guidance, which was last updated in 2008. The guidance identifies activities that regulated entities can consider implementing as part of an information security program as well as offering resources to help in complying with the HIPAA security rule.
- The **Federal Trade Commission** (FTC) and the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) are soliciting public comment under a request for information pertaining to market concentration among large health care group purchasing organizations (GPO) and drug wholesalers, as well as information about contracting practices. The purpose of the request is to provide the federal agencies with an understanding of how the practices of two pharmaceutical drug middlemen groups – GPOs and drug wholesalers – may contribute to generic drug shortages. Comments may be submitted through this [link](#).
- “The Future of Medicine Now” is the title of an upcoming half-day symposium for health care professionals scheduled to be held March 23 at the Westin Hotel – Richmond. The conference will focus on the latest in leading-edge technology and research in cardiology and vascular medicine. Topics include treatment for arrhythmia, heart failure, valvular disease, vascular disease, and current research at **HCA Virginia**. The target audience includes physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, technologists, pharmacists, and emergency medical service providers. Continuing medical education credits will be provided. Visit this [link](#) for more information.
- The **MCV Foundation** at **VCU Health** recently issued a special edition of *NEXT* magazine, which focuses on VCU Health health equity programs and research in the Richmond, VA region. Read the magazine [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 [WHSV](#) and the [Augusta Free Press](#).

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2. Contact Legislators to Support Budget Amendment for Community Health Workers

Community health workers (CHW) are essential members of the health care delivery system whose contributions can improve individual health by helping to identify and address health-related social needs such as issues related to nutrition, housing, education, and transportation. CHWs often have strong connections to their communities that can be beneficial in helping people access needed services and resources. They work in a variety of settings including community-based organizations such as local health departments, free clinics, and federally qualified health centers. State support is needed for CHWs to continue that important work. A proposed budget amendment (Senate budget item 292 #3s) would direct the **Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)** to convene a stakeholder work group to design and study a Medicaid benefit for services provided by community health workers. VHHA supports the inclusion of this critical provision in the final version of the proposed two-year state budget. With the Virginia General Assembly in the home stretch of the 2024 legislative session (adjournment is scheduled for March 9) and budget negotiations ongoing, it is vital for lawmakers to hear from health care voters who understand the value of CHWs to public health. Please take a few moments to send a message to your local legislator to express your support for Senate budget item 292 #3s to establish a Medicaid benefit for CHWs. The process is simple and takes seconds. Visit this [link](#), enter your name and address, and click send to express your support for CHWs. – Julie Dime

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3. Register for the 2024 Virginia Healthcare Workforce Summit on March 19

Registration is open for the **2024 Virginia Healthcare Workforce Summit** scheduled for March 19 (9:15 a.m.-3:30 p.m.) as a virtual event. The Summit theme is “Strengthening the Healthcare Workforce through Innovation and Purpose” and will focus on opportunities to invest in, realign, and refocus efforts to support and strengthen the health care workforce. Summit programming will feature strategies for attracting and retaining talent in the post-pandemic workplace, effective strategies for promoting employee well-being and safety, streamlining processes with rapidly advancing technologies including Artificial Intelligence, and upskilling and career advancement opportunities as a win-win for the workforce and employers. This is a virtual event that is free to staff members of Virginia hospitals and students. Register for the Summit through this [link](#) using the e-mail address of the person attending so they can receive verification codes the day of the event to ensure smooth access to the virtual event platform. Please send any event or registration questions to events@vhha.com. – Sharon Alexander

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4. Save the Date for Virginia Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Summit, April 24 in Richmond

Save the date for the **2024 Virginia Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Summit**, which is scheduled for April 24 at The Westin – Richmond. The theme for this year’s Summit is “Human Caused Incidents” and it will feature speakers, panelists, sponsors, and support organizations focused on how the Virginia health care community can strengthen its preparedness for such situations. Visit this [link](#) for more information and contact Isaac Rife at irife@vhha.com to learn about sponsorship opportunities.

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5. VHHA, VNPC to Host Five-Part Monthly Webinar Series on Maternal and Infant Health Data Sources

VHHA and the **Virginia Neonatal Perinatal Collaborative** (VNPC) are hosting a free, five-part monthly webinar series focused on public-facing maternal and infant health data sources that organizations can use for research, quality improvement, grant applications, and more. The webinar series has been designed for hospital and community partners and will feature presentations from representatives of VHHA, VNPC, the **Virginia Department of Health** (VDH), the **Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services** (DMAS), and **Virginia Health Information** (VHI). Visit this [link](#) to learn more and register.

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6. VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Physician Leader from VCU Health Burn Center

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Dr. Michael Feldman**, Medical Director of the **Evans-Haynes Burn Center** at **VCU Health**. The conversation covers his career and clinical work in burn care, the importance of Burn Awareness Week and burn prevention initiatives, and more. 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. AHA Requests that Hospitals Participate in Biennial DEI Survey

The **American Hospital Association** (AHA) Institute for Diversity and Health Equity (IFDHE) recently launched the 2024 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey and is requesting that hospitals and health systems participate in the biennial survey. Responses help provide a snapshot of hospital and health system efforts, successes, and challenges in diversity, equity, and inclusion. To ensure the survey captures critical variations and provides actionable insights, AHA requests that each hospital within a system complete the survey independently. Hospitals should have received a link to the survey on Jan. 31 from this AHA email address: surveysupport@aha.org. The survey will be open until March. Questions about the survey may be directed to institute@aha.org.

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8. FDA Approves Cellular Therapy for Adult Skin Cancer Treatment

The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) recently approved Amtagvi, the first cellular therapy indicated for the treatment of adult patients with a type of skin cancer (melanoma) that is unable to be removed with surgery (unresectable) or has spread to other parts of the body (metastatic) that previously has been treated with other therapies (a PD-1 blocking antibody, and if *BRAF* V600 mutation positive, a *BRAF* inhibitor with or without a MEK inhibitor). Melanoma is a form of skin cancer that is often caused by exposure to ultraviolet light, which can come from sunlight or indoor tanning. Although

melanomas only represent approximately 1 percent of all skin cancers, they account for a significant number of cancer-related deaths. Melanoma can spread to other parts of the body if not detected and treated early, resulting in metastatic disease. Treatment for unresectable or metastatic melanoma may include immunotherapy using PD-1 inhibitors, which are antibodies targeting certain proteins in the body to help the immune system fight off cancer cells. In addition, drugs targeting the *BRAF* gene, which helps with managing the growth and functioning of cells, may be used for treating melanoma associated with *BRAF* gene mutations. Those patients whose melanoma has progressed with these therapies have a high unmet medical need. Amtagvi is a tumor-derived autologous T cell immunotherapy composed of a patient's own T cells, a type of cell that helps the immune system fight cancer. Read more [here](#).

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9. Virginia Infection Prevention Training Center Shares New Training Videos

The **Virginia Infection Prevention Training Center** (VIPTC) has released a new round of infection prevention and control training videos that use animation to convey information about infection prevention and control topics that are important for health care professionals to know. The latest videos include *Staying Safe in the Splash Zone* and *Donning & Doffing*. Access the videos [here](#) or visit the VIPTC [website](#) to learn more.

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10. Around the State

Nathan Vooyos has been named Chief Executive Officer of **Reston Hospital Center**, effective March 4, 2024. He has served as CEO of **StoneSprings Hospital Center** for the past three years. Vooyo earned an undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University and a master's of business administration degree from the USC Marshall School of Business. Read more [here](#).

Karah Gunther, Vice President of External Affairs and Health Policy at **VCU Health**, has been appointed to the **Virginia Center for Health Innovation** Leadership Council.

Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and **Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital** have received the Focused Verification designation from the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Quality Verification Program (QVP). **Carilion Clinic** is the second health system in Virginia, and one of only 17 in the nation, to receive the Focused Verification designation.

Lonesome Pine Hospital (Ballad Health), **Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital, Smyth County Community Hospital (Ballad Health)**, and **Warren Memorial Hospital (Valley Health)** have been named to the Chartis Center for Rural Health's annual list of the top 100 rural and community hospitals in the U.S. Read more [here](#).

Chesapeake Regional Medical Center, CJW Medical Center (HCA Virginia), Inova Fairfax Hospital, Sentara Leigh Hospital, Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, Sentara Leigh Hospital, and UVA Health have been named to The Best Hospitals of 2024 [list](#) by *Money*.

Dr. Clint Merritt, MD, Senior Vice President of **Augusta Health**, has been named Chief Physician Executive and Chief Medical Officer. He joined Augusta Health in 2004 and most recently held the role of Vice President of Population Health and Executive Director of Augusta Care Partners. – Salinna Lor

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