

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:

- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** has issued [draft guidance](#) to assist medical product sponsors in submitting Diversity Action Plans to support certain clinical studies. Diversity Action Plans are intended to increase clinical study enrollment of participants of historically underrepresented populations to help improve the data the agency receives about the patients who may potentially use the medical product. Enhancing diversity within clinical studies not only facilitates broader applicability of results across a broad spectrum of patient populations, but also enhances understanding of the disease or medical product under study, thus providing valuable insights to inform the safe and effective use of the medical product among patients. Read more [here](#).
- This week, VHHA held a meeting of the **Chief Nursing Officers and Nurse Leaders Forum** for a discussion of issues including the Nurse Staffing Committee model, workplace violence prevention efforts, among other topics.
- **HosPAC**, the political action committee of VHHA, is in the midst of its 2024 fundraising campaign and needs support from members of the health care community. Financial contributions of any amount, large or small, help HosPAC support candidates for state office who are committed to strengthening the health care delivery system in Virginia by growing the health care workforce, promoting access to care, and investing in public health. By supporting candidates from both parties who champion these values, HosPAC helps advance the voice of the health care community in state public policy development. Please consider contributing to HosPAC to support this important work on behalf of Virginia hospitals, health systems, and their teams.

Visit this [link](#) to make contributions and contact Hannah Coley at hcoley@vhha.com with any questions.

- The **VHHA Communications Team** recently received national award recognition for its work. The [National Federation of Press Women](#) awarded VHHA with an Honorable Mention for an episode of the *Patients Come First* podcast and a first place award for the Hospital Workplace Violence – Northern Virginia video. VHHA also won a Silver award for the *Patients Come First* podcast and a Gold award for the Hospital Workplace Violence – Northern Virginia video in the [DANDA Awards](#) that honor the best design and aesthetics for digital and physical/print-based media produced for the healthcare industry.
- **U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy** has issued an advisory declaring firearm violence a public health crisis in America. See more [here](#).
- The **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA)** and the **Virginia Nurses Association (VNA)** have developed strategies to elevate the voice of frontline nurses so that their valuable perspectives and ideas are shared with hospital leaders through the creation of a framework and principles for establishing Nurse Staffing Committee models in Virginia hospitals. The Committee framework provides a structured template for this work while also allowing flexibility for individual hospitals to customize plans appropriate for their unique needs. It has been developed to facilitate enhanced collaboration between hospital leaders and bedside nurses on the development of innovative staffing solutions to address health care team workload and drive quality and safety improvements within existing system constraints. The model can be customized to function within existing organizational structures at hospitals with unique features and can work alongside existing programs to engage with nurses. Framework planning and implementation will occur in close coordination with Virginia hospital chief nursing officers and nursing leaders who helped develop the model and VHHA will offer technical assistance and support to hospitals as they move forward on this work. Read more [here](#) and access the Nurse Staffing Committee toolkit through this [link](#).
- Health care organizations are advised to implement software patches or other mitigation strategies to address 14 cyber vulnerabilities identified by the **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)**. The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Health Sector Cybersecurity Coordination Center (HC3)** advises that the vulnerabilities affect the following systems: Baxter Welch Allyn, Microsoft, Google/Android, Apple, Mozilla, Cisco, SAP, Adobe, Fortinet and Atlassian. Read more [here](#).
- The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** recently announced that payments under the Accelerated and Advance Payment (AAP) Program for the Change Healthcare/Optum Payment Disruption (CHOPD) will conclude on July 12. Launched in early March, the CHOPD payments were designed to ease cash flow disruptions experienced by some Medicare providers and suppliers, such as hospitals, physicians, and pharmacists, due to the unprecedented cyberattack that took the health care electronic data interchange, Change Healthcare, offline in February. Read more [here](#).
- A webinar briefing about the 2024 Atlantic Hurricane Season featuring **National Weather Service** officials was recently presented for health care providers by VHHA, the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**, the **Central Virginia Healthcare Coalition**, the **Eastern Virginia Healthcare Coalition**, the **Northern Virginia Emergency Response System**, and the **Southwest Virginia Healthcare Coalition**. View a webinar recording through this [link](#) and access presentation slides [here](#).
- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** has initiated the “From Me, To You” maternal health campaign that includes resources to encourage Black mothers to receive

vaccinations during pregnancy. Getting recommended vaccinations during pregnancy can help the body create protective antibodies (proteins produced by the body to fight off illnesses) that you can be passed on to a baby. These antibodies help protect babies from several illnesses during their first few months of life. Visit this [link](#) to read more and access resources for patients and providers.

- The **U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Labor, and Treasury** recently announced a 120-day extension for parties impacted by the **Change Healthcare** cyberattack to open disputes under the No Surprises Act independent dispute resolution (IDR) process. Parties have until Oct. 12 to file disputes and must attest that their ability to open a dispute was impacted by the incident, according to the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)**. The departments have published an [attestation](#) that parties must submit along with the standard IDR form during the extension period. Read more [here](#).
- The **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)** recently issued a proposed rule that would remove medical bills from credit reports by prohibiting credit reporting companies from sharing medical debts with lenders and preventing lenders from making borrowing decisions based on that information. The proposed rule would amend a regulation used in the implementation of Fair Credit Reporting Act. Public comment on the proposed rule is being accepted through Aug. 12. Read more [here](#).
- July 22 is the deadline for submitting public comment to the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** on the information requirements associated with attestation requirements included in the Medicaid managed care access rule. Read more and submit comment through this [link](#).
- The **Disparities Solutions Center** is now accepting applications for the [2024-2025 Disparities Leadership Program](#), which is a year-long, hands-on executive education program focused on helping health care leaders achieve equity. The program is designed to help leaders translate the latest understanding of disparities into realistic solutions that can be applied within organizations. To date, more than 569 participants from 236 organizations representing 35 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, Canada, and Switzerland have participated in the program. Letters of intent from applicants are due by July 12 and applications are due by Aug. 2. Download the necessary forms through this [link](#).
- The **Virginia Infection Prevention Training Center (VIPTC)** recently released a new training video called *Germ Center*. Featuring fun characters and engaging storylines, this video covers the latest health care wins, losses, and highlights. This is the newest installment in VIPTC's growing infection prevention training video library. Access the video [here](#) or visit the VIPTC [website](#) to learn more.
- The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** is seeking public comment on [draft guidance](#) regarding the Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program, which will negotiate prices with drug makers for certain high-cost, sole-source drugs and apply them beginning in 2026. The drug price program is a provision of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. July 2 is the public comment deadline. Read more [here](#).

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2. VHHA Shares Annual Member Feedback Survey Seeking Input from Hospital Staff

VHHA is sharing the 2024 Member Feedback Survey, which provides individuals who work for VHHA member hospitals and health systems, as well as other stakeholders engaged with the Association, with an opportunity to share their insights and observations about the VHHA, its work, programming, and

engagement activities. Please take a moment to complete the survey and share feedback about VHHA [here](#).

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3. HHS Final Rule Establishes ‘Disincentives’ for Health Care Provider ‘Information Blocking’

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) recently released a final rule regarding “disincentives” for health care providers engaged in information blocking pertaining to interfering with the access, exchange, or use of electronic health information. In the final rule, hospitals under the Medicare Promoting Interoperability Program found to have committed information blocking would experience a reduction of the market basket update by 75 percent. Critical access hospitals would see a reduction from 101-100 percent of reasonable costs, while clinicians in Medicare’s Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) would receive a score of zero in the MIPS Promoting Interoperability performance category. Providers in accountable care organizations that commit information blocking would be ineligible to participate in the Medicare Shared Savings program for at least one year and may not receive revenue they may have earned through the program. Read more [here](#).

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4. FBI, HHS Offer Warning About Cyberthreat to Health Care Organizations

The **Federal Bureau of Investigations** (FBI) and **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) recently issued an advisory about cyberthreat actors targeting health care organizations in attempts to steal payments. The agencies have recommended mitigation efforts to help reduce the likelihood of being impacted. Threat actors have been found to use phishing efforts to gain access to employees’ email accounts, and then pivoting to target login information related to the processing of reimbursement payments to insurance companies, Medicare, or similar entities. In some instances, threat actors would call an organization’s information technology help desk posing as an employee of the organization to trigger a password reset for the employee’s account. Read more [here](#).

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5. Federal Court Rejects Rule Restricting Health Care Use of Common Digital Tracking Tools

A recent federal court decision has been deemed a victory for health care providers that use standard third-party web technologies that capture IP addresses on portions of their public-facing webpages. The [ruling](#) from the **U.S. District Court for the Northern Division of Texas** found that bulletins issued by the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) seeking to restrict such practices are unlawful. Hospital advocates including the **American Hospital Association** (AHA) challenged the HHS guidance, asking the courts to block its enforcement on the grounds that it inhibited the ability of hospitals and health systems to share health care information with the communities they serve and analyze their own website traffic to enhance access to care and public health. In response to the lawsuit, the HHS Office for Civil Rights in March issued updated guidance for HIPAA-covered entities and business associates on using online tracking technologies.

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6. VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features VCU Health Transplant Program Physician Leader

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Dr. Aamir Khan**, Medical Director of the Islet Cell Transplant Program at the **VCU Health Hume-Lee Transplant Center**. He joins us for a conversation about his work, the Hume-Lee Transplant Center, 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 Sunday at 9 a.m. on 100.5 FM, 107.7 FM, 92.7 FM, and 820 AM across Central Virginia and 1650 AM in Hampton Roads, 105.1 FM and 1050 AM in Lynchburg, and Wednesdays at 1 p.m. on 93.9 FM in Richmond. Send questions, comments, feedback, or guest suggestions to pcfpodcast@vhha.com. – Salinna Lor

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7. VNPC Seeks Survey Feedback on Virginia Maternal Health Needs, Eliminating Bias in Dyad Care

Last year, the **Virginia Neonatal Perinatal Collaborative** (VNPC) was awarded the [HRSA Maternal Health Innovation](#) grant. The grant components include developing maternal health hubs, convening the Maternal Health Task Force with input from Virginia communities, and developing and implementing a strategic plan over the next five years. As part of an environmental scan related to this grant, the VNPC is asking partner organizations to complete a brief [survey](#) to help identify where maternal health needs exist in Virginia. The VNPC is also asking professionals who work with pregnant or parenting patients and infants impacted by substance use disorder to complete a [survey](#) to help further the work of the [Eliminating Bias in the Dyad Care](#) (EBDC) project, which is focused on improving outcomes for those individuals. The survey targets improvements in substance use and exposure among mothers and infants. All responses are confidential, with aggregate results shared; no personal information is required.

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8. CMS Issues 2025 Home Health Prospective Payment System Proposed Rule

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) has issued the [calendar year 2025 home health prospective payment system proposed rule](#), which calls for reducing net home health payments by an estimated \$280 million, or 1.7 percent, relative to the current year. The proposal includes a 3 percent market basket update, reduced by a 0.5 percent productivity adjustment. CMS also proposes to reduce the base payment rate by 4.1 percent due to the implementation of the Patient-Driven Groupings Model (PDGM), reducing total payments by 3.6 percent. The rule also calls for updating the HHA Conditions of Participation to add a new standard that would require HHAs to develop, consistently apply, and maintain a policy for accepting patients to service. And CMS proposes to revise the infection prevention and control requirements for long-term care facilities to extend reporting to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC) of a subset of the current COVID-19 data elements and also require reporting for data related to influenza and RSV to begin Jan. 1, 2025. Public comment on the proposed rule is being accepted through Aug. 26.

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9. CDC Issues Alert on Risk of Dengue Virus Infections in the U.S.

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC) has issued a health alert network (HAN) advisory to notify health care providers, public health authorities, and the public about an increased risk of dengue virus (DENV) infections in the United States in 2024. Global incidence of dengue in 2024 has been the highest on record for this calendar year, with many nations reporting higher-than-usual case counts. Dengue is the most common arboviral disease globally. It is a nationally notifiable disease in the U.S. Approximately one in four DENV infections are symptomatic. Symptoms begin after an incubation period of 5-7 days (range 3-10 days) and present as fever accompanied by non-specific signs and symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, rash, muscle aches, joint pain, bone pain, pain behind the eyes, headache, or low white blood cell counts. Read more [here](#).

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10. Around the State

Carl Cline, Vice President and Hospital Administrator for **Carilion Franklin Memorial Hospital**, and **Amber Price**, DNP, RN, President of **Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center**, have been named to the *Becker's Hospital Review* 2024 160 community hospital CEOs to know [list](#).

Augusta Health is one of three hospitals and health systems nationwide to receive the highly esteemed 2024 Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care (EOC) Award from the **American Hospital Association** (AHA). The Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care Award is given to hospitals and health systems for their deep dedication to reducing health disparities and other inequities within their communities. Read more [here](#).

Kris Doan has been named President of **Augusta Medical Group**. He comes to Augusta Health from Health First, a health system in Melbourne, FL where he most recently held the position of Chief Operating Officer. Doan holds a master of business administration degree from the University of Florida – Warrington College of Business and is a Fellow of the **American College of Healthcare Executives** (FACHE). Read more [here](#).

Children's National Hospital has appointed **Dr. Jennifer Cully**, DMD, MEd, as its Division Chief of Oral Health. She earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the College of William & Mary, a doctor of medicine in dentistry degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, and received a certificate in pediatric dentistry from Children's National. She received her master of education degree from the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Cully is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American College of Dentists and will be inducted as a fellow in the International College of Dentists this fall. Read more [here](#).

Children's National Hospital has appointed **Gina M. Cronin**, MHA, FACHE, as its new Senior Vice President (SVP) and Chief People Officer. She earned a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan. Cronin is an alumnus of the Cleveland Clinic Administrative Fellowship. Read more [here](#).

Wythe County Community Hospital has received the Environmental Excellence Award from Stryker's Sustainability Solutions. This designation is reserved for select hospitals that demonstrate outstanding leadership in health care sustainability and overall hospital quality through single-use device (SUD) reprocessing. Read more [here](#). – Salinna Lor

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