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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 **Virginia Community College System (VCCS)** is hosting a Healthcare Summit focused on workforce development and challenges on Nov. 29 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Brightpoint Community College Chester Campus. The event is being hosted in conjunction with **Virginia Health and Human Resources Secretary John Littell**, the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association**, the **Claude Moore Foundation**, the **Virginia Healthcare Association** and **Virginia Center for Assisted Living**, the **Virginia Dental Association**, and the **Virginia Chamber of Commerce**. The goal of the event is to build support among health care organizations and partners in preparation for legislative asks to support health care program offerings by Virginia's Community Colleges to promote workforce development efforts. The Summit will highlight what VCCS is already doing and strategies for scaling health care programs and pipelines across the Commonwealth and the health care spectrum (nursing, allied health, dental, and behavioral health). Participants will be asked to work collaboratively to develop plans to improve accessibility and quality of healthcare programs on a regional basis. See more information about the Summit [here](#) and register for this free event by the Nov. 16 deadline through this [link](#).
- This week, the **Virginia Healthcare Emergency Management Program (VHEMP)** – a partnership between the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**, VHHA, and the Commonwealth's four Regional Healthcare Coalitions – hosted a webinar focused on federal and state agency response to a terrorism event that produces a hazardous materials situation and the impact of such a scenario on the community and the health care delivery system. The webinar featured representatives from the **Virginia State Police** Special Investigations and Programs Division

Counter-Terrorism Section, and the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** (FBI) Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinator Program.

- VHHA has produced a [highlight video](#) summarizing the annual fall conference held Sept. 27-29 in Roanoke, Virginia. The [conference](#), whose theme was “Aim For The Stars,” brought together hundreds of health care leaders, clinicians, and stakeholders, as well as partner organizations for networking, shared learning, and collaboration. Program highlights included keynote remarks from **Hayley Arceneaux**, a physician assistant at **St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital** and pediatric cancer survivor who recently served as chief medical officer on the first all-civilian mission to orbit (Inspiration4); and **Kay Firth-Butterfield**, the head of Artificial Intelligence and a member of the Executive Committee at the **World Economic Forum**. Other conference highlights included a reception at the **Taubman Museum of Art**, breakout learning sessions on government advocacy, health care workforce development, and health care quality and safety, and an awards luncheon to honor several health care and community leaders.
- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC) recently released [interim guidance](#) for clinicians with limited access to the monoclonal antibody nirsevimab that was recently approved to prevent respiratory syncytial virus in children ages 2 and younger. Among other recommendations, the guidance calls for prioritizing 100 milligram doses of the treatment for infants under 6 months old and infants at high risk for severe disease due to underlying health conditions.
- In November, the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) will begin [transitioning to commercial distribution](#) of an estimated 7.9 million treatment courses of the COVID-19 antiviral pill Paxlovid under an [agreement with Pfizer](#). Authorized for emergency use, the supply will remain available for ordering from HHS through Dec. 15, 2023. Beginning in 2024, Pfizer will sell Paxlovid to privately insured patients and operate a federal co-pay assistance program for these individuals through 2028. Pfizer also will continue to operate a federal assistance program to offer the HHS-procured supply without cost to eligible Medicare, Medicaid, and uninsured patients through 2024 and to eligible uninsured and underinsured individuals from 2025 through 2028, updating any expired product. The company also will provide HHS with an additional 1 million treatment courses for the national stockpile.
- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) recently [announced that it is soliciting public comments](#) to understand the state of innovation in clinical trial design and conduct. CDER is gathering information from internal and external stakeholders on the barriers and facilitators to incorporating innovative clinical trial approaches in drug development programs. CDER, in partnership with the Duke Margolis Center for Health Policy, is also planning a public workshop on this topic for March 19 and 20, 2024. Responses to this public docket will inform the public workshop and CDER’s future work related to clinical trial innovation. Comments to docket FDA-2023-N-4489 are now being accepted. Read more [here](#).
- The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) recently released star ratings for 2024 Medicare Advantage and prescription drug plans, which are available through the “find plans” tool at [Medicare.gov](#). Additional information on 2024 ratings changes and improvements are available in a [CMS fact sheet](#). Open enrollment for 2024 Medicare Advantage and prescription drug plans began Oct. 15 and ends Dec. 7.
- As of Nov. 1, [Virginia’s Insurance Marketplace](#) will be open for individuals to shop for health care coverage that begins on Jan. 1, 2024. The open enrollment window spans Nov. 1-Jan. 15. The availability of the Virginia portal means that individuals do not need to visit [healthcare.gov](#) to shop for coverage. Virginians can also call 888-687-1501 to speak with representatives at

Virginia's Insurance Marketplace call center who are exclusively focused on Virginia's health plans and eligibility policies. The Consumer Assistance Center TTY (TeleType) number is 711. Spanish and additional translation services are also available.

- The [independent dispute resolution portal](#) established as part of the federal No Surprises Act has been reopened by CMS. The process was suspended earlier this year in the wake of federal court rulings in favor of litigants challenging certain regulatory standards associated with the implementation of the legislation intended to protect patients from surprise medical bills arising from emergency care. The portal has now been reopened to out-of-network providers and group health plans initiating new single payment disputes under the No Surprises Act's independent dispute resolution process, including single disputes involving bundled payment arrangements. CMS has also provided new [guidance](#) regarding the processing of such disputes.
- The **Drug Enforcement Administration** (DEA) and the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (SAMHSA) recently released a [temporary rule](#) extending telehealth prescribing flexibilities for buprenorphine and other controlled substances for new practitioner-patient relationships through Dec. 31, 2024. The agencies previously extended the flexibilities through Nov. 11, 2024 while considering changes to proposed rules released in March that would limit telehealth prescriptions for buprenorphine and other controlled substances to a 30-day supply unless the prescriber or referring clinician have evaluated the patient in person.
- The Compact Act, effective as of January 2023, enables eligible individuals in suicidal crisis to go to any **Veterans Affairs** (VA) facility, or any community health care facility, for emergency health care and VA will pay for that care – including transportation costs, inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days, including social work. Emergency medical facilities across the state should be aware of this standard in anticipation of any veterans crossing their thresholds for care to support mental health treatment for military veterans outside of Veterans Affairs facilities. Read more [here](#).
- To provide the health care community with timely information on emerging issues, VHHA will host a quarterly public health webinar series for Virginia hospitals and health systems featuring updates provided by 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. See more information and register for this series through this [link](#).
- 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](#), [WRIC](#), [VPM](#), and the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#).

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2. FDA Extends Shelf Life of Gohibic COVID-19 Treatment for Certain Hospitalized Adults

The FDA recently authorized an extended shelf life (from 24 to 30 months) for [Gohibic](#) (vilobelimab), which is authorized for emergency use to treat COVID-19 in certain hospitalized adults. The FDA granted this extension following a thorough review of data submitted by InflaRx GmbH. As a result of this extension, some batches may be stored for an additional 6 months from the labeled date of expiry. This extension applies to all retained product that has been held in accordance with storage conditions detailed in the authorized [Fact Sheet for Health Care Providers](#) and the [Letter of Authorization](#). More information about the use of Gohibic can be found in the [FDA statement](#) describing the authorization for this product.

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3. National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is Saturday, Oct. 28

This Saturday (Oct. 28) is [National Prescription Drug Take Back Day](#), an opportunity for the public to safely dispose of unwanted or expired tablets, capsules, patches and other solid forms of prescription drugs. The event offers free and anonymous disposal of unneeded medications at almost 5,000 local drop-off locations nationwide. Over more than 10 years, the **U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration** (DEA) event has collected 8,650 tons of old, unwanted, or expired medications, including opioid and other drugs susceptible to diversion, misuse and abuse. Collection sites should be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. local time. Search for local collection sites through this [link](#).

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4. No-Cost, On-Demand Infection Prevention and Control Course Available Through VCU

The **Virginia Infection Prevention Training Center** (VIPTC) at VCU has announced a free, on-demand advanced level course in infection prevention and control. This course will focus on quality and performance improvement, epidemiologic methods for surveillance and basic biostatistical data analysis, interpretation of literature for evidence-based practice, and infection prevention program management and modifiable risk factors. Funding provided by VDH allows this course to be offered at no charge to participants and CE credits are available. Register for the course [here](#) and learn more from the VIPTC [website](#).

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5. VHHA to Host Nov. 1 Webinar on State Vaccines for Children Program

VHHA is hosting a Nov. 1 webinar from 12:15-1 p.m. to share information about the VDH Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. The VFC program provides Nirsevimab (Beyfortus), a long-acting monoclonal antibody for the prevention of RSV in infants, free of charge to enrolled birthing hospital providers. During the webinar, VDH representatives will provide information on program specifics and enrollment. Officials from the **Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services** (DMAS) will also share policy and coverage information specific to the administration of Beyfortus in the hospital environment. Register for the webinar through this [link](#).

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6. VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Sentara Health Community Benefit Manager

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features an interview with **Tameka Irving**, a Community Benefit Manager at **Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital**, for a conversation about her work and the community health programmatic offerings provided by the hospital. 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. CISA, FBI Offer Cybersecurity Guidance for Organizations to Address

The **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency** (CISA), FBI, and the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center recently alerted organizations to a critical vulnerability affecting certain versions of the Atlassian Confluence Data Center and Server that enables malicious actors to obtain access to victim systems and continue active exploitation post-patch. The agencies strongly encourage network administrators to immediately apply the recommended upgrades and recommended responses to indicators of compromise. The FBI and CISA also recently released updated recommendations to [protect against AvosLocker ransomware](#). Federal agencies have also offered recent guidance to help organizations reduce the risk of [ransomware](#) and [phishing](#) attacks, as well as [guidance for software manufacturers](#).

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8. Health Care Professionals Can Apply for Sorensen Institute Political Leaders Program by Nov. 13

The **Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership** at the **University of Virginia** has opened the application period for the 2024 Political Leader Program; the application window will close on Nov. 13. Visit this [link](#) for more information and access the program application link [here](#). The previous class featured several VHHA-affiliated individuals – in 2020, VHHA [entered into a five-year partnership with Sorensen](#) to support its programming and help identify health care leaders who are strong candidates for the Political Leaders Program. Program participants are drawn from a diverse group of applicants from across the state, and will focus on Virginia politics and governing, policy issues and solutions, regional needs, ethical servant leadership, and efforts to unite the Commonwealth. This program is primarily focused on individuals who are 10-plus years removed from college.

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9. Information, Updates Regarding State Health Workforce Incentive Programs

Virginia has several state health workforce incentive programs that received new or continued funding in the state budget for fiscal year 2024. Learn more about these programs through this [link](#).

- The Virginia State Loan Repayment Program (VA-SLRP) is a federal grant from the **Health Resources Services Administration** (HRSA) Bureau of Health Professions that is administered by VDH. VA-SLRP provides educational loan repayment to participants in exchange for a commitment of at least two years of service in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) within Virginia. Full- and part-time health care professionals who have received training in several disciplines are eligible to apply to VA-SLRP, including primary care physicians, dentists, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, physician assistants, registered dental hygienists, psychiatric nurse specialists, mental health counselors, health service psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, alcohol and abuse counselors (Master's level), marriage and family therapists, registered nurses, and pharmacists. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).
- The Virginia Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program (BH-LRP) received an additional \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2024 to help recruit and retain behavioral health professionals to practice in underserved areas of the Commonwealth or to provide counseling and treatment to underserved populations. This program repays a portion of an eligible

professional's student loan debt. In return, recipients commit to practicing in Virginia for a minimum of two years at an eligible site. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).

- Mary Marshall Nursing Scholarships (LPN, RN) are available to students living in Virginia for at least one year and enrolled either full- or part-time in a nursing program for licensure (LPN, RN) who can apply to receive up to \$2,000 per year for up to four years in exchange for service in Virginia after graduation. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#). Students enrolled in, or who graduated from, an approved certified nursing assistant (CNA) program can apply for scholarships of up to \$1,000. CNAs who have graduated and obtained licensure or certification within one year of their application and are currently employed or under contract, or are enrolled in a program to initiate the licensure process with an employer, with an anticipated employment start date, are also eligible. Further details regarding eligibility and the application process can be accessed [here](#).
- Virginia Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Midwife, and Nurse Educator Scholarship programs provide scholarship awards to students who agree to practice full-time as a nurse practitioner or nurse midwife in a medically underserved area of Virginia. The Nurse Educator Scholarship Program is intended for part-time and full-time Master and doctoral-level nursing students. All programs require residency in Virginia for at least one year and full- or part-time enrollment in the appropriate educational program along with submission of a completed application and other required materials. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).
- The Virginia Nursing Preceptor Incentive Program was initially established by the General Assembly in 2021 to provide financial incentives for practitioners who serve as otherwise uncompensated preceptors for APRN students. The current state budget includes \$3 million in additional funding to expand the cap amount and new language that expands the criteria to include preceptors for RN students. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).
- The Earn To Learn Nursing Acceleration Program is supported with \$5 million in the amended state budget for the current fiscal year to support implementation of the initiative that aims to accelerate practice readiness by bridging the gap between education and clinical practice while addressing the demand for more nurses. The funding will be available in the form of grants for hospitals that propose implementing the model in partnership with local nursing programs, although more specific grant criteria will be announced when finalized. VDH is currently in the planning phase for this grant program. VHHA has retained two consultants: **Eileen Dohmann**, former CNO and developer of the Earn While You Learn model at **Mary Washington Healthcare**, and **Patti Lisk**, former Dean of Nursing for **Germanna Community College**, to assist VHHA members with program planning, logistics and program rollout, and proposal writing as needed. Contact VHHA Director of Workforce Initiatives Sharon Alexander at salexander@vhha.com about interest and needs.

For more information about incentive programs offered by VDH contact the Statewide Health Workforce Manager, Olivette Burroughs, at olivette.burroughs@vdh.virginia.gov.

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10. Around the State

The **Certification Board for Professionals in Patient Safety** (CBPPS) recently recognized **Dr. Peter O'Brien**, MD, CPPS, FACC, the Medical Director of **Centra Health** Stroobants Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory and Chief Quality Officer of Centra's Heart and Vascular Institute, as a Certified Professional in Patient Safety (CPPS). Read more [here](#).

The **UVA School of Medicine** has named **Matthew J. Gurka, PhD**, to chair its Department of Public Health Sciences. He joins UVA from the University of Florida, where he serves as vice chair of health outcomes and translational research and director of the Pediatric Research Hub in the Department of Pediatrics. He earned his PhD in biostatistics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Read more [here](#).

Caroline Hyun Sue Kim, a student at the **Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine**, has been awarded an ISDA Foundation G.E.R.M (Grants for Emerging Researcher/Clinician Mentorship Program) Grant for her Candidemia and Eye Complications research. – Salinna Lor

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