

Northern Virginia Hospital CEO to Retire

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Jim Cole has been CEO of Virginia Hospital Center since 1994.

Virginia Hospital Center President and CEO Jim Cole is stepping down after more than three decades with the organization.

Cole, chief for 25 of his 35 years with the Arlington hospital, announced his retirement internally Monday. It's set to take effect Sept. 1, 2020.

Until then, the hospital's board will search for its next leader. We've reached out for additional information about the timeline and will update this post as we hear back.

"While I will miss the daily camaraderie and relationships I have built with all of you, I know the time is right and that Virginia Hospital Center Health System has a bright future ahead," Cole wrote in his email to VHC staff. "I am confident that I'm leaving at a time when the quality of patient care and safety is at an all-time high and that our Health System and Hospital is well-positioned strategically and financially for the future. There will be challenges, but I am also confident that as in previous years this organization will turn them into opportunities."

During his tenure, Cole helped grow what was once a small community hospital to a 357-bed facility that is now part of the Mayo Clinic referral network. His departure comes during a \$250 million expansion that will add an outpatient pavilion, parking garage and 44 new beds, as well as an effort to secure Level 2 trauma center designation from the Virginia Department of Health to handle more serious injuries in its emergency room.

VHC also sets itself apart in the region's health care terrain as Northern Virginia's only standalone, independent acute-care facility in an era of mass consolidation. Inova Health System and Nashville, Tennessee-based HCA Healthcare Inc. (NYSE: HCA) currently dominate the Northern Virginia hospital scene, while the likes of MedStar Health, Adventist HealthCare and Johns Hopkins Health have staked their claim on several hospitals in Maryland and D.C.

Cole — one of the Washington Business Journal's Most Admired CEOs of 2013 — is a member and former chair of the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association Board and was inducted into the Arlington Business Hall of Fame. He earned his master's in health administration from Georgia State University, master's in urban planning from the University of Washington and bachelor's from the University of Virginia.