

August 5, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

It was a decade ago that the NCH Board of Trustees ratified the three goals that still guide our institution 10 years later: (1) *demonstrated quality*, (2) *operational efficiency* and (3) *fiscal responsibility*. As we look back along the time line, we can document our journey in improvement on each of these yardsticks.

- We won our first quality award ever in 2004 for excellence in cardiology.
- Over the subsequent years, we have earned over 90 awards, most based on the publicly-reported data shared by 5,000 U.S. hospitals.
- Four years ago, we formed a Quality Committee of the Board, now chaired by Dr. **John Lewis**. Dr. **Paul Dernbach**, Medical Staff President, has made quality a center piece as our journey continues.

In medicine, there is an expression, “*You are only as good as your last patient.*” That applies to all of us at NCH. We don’t have the luxury of relying on past performance. We must constantly improve the quality of the care we deliver to our patients.

To help track that care, there are more than 20 different hospital rating services with more than 3,000 measurements. Clearly, no single service is fool proof. Health care is in flux and in the midst of a great digital revolution. This suggests a lack of precision and accuracy from rating agencies, which leads to some confusion and lack of confidence in some data produced. Nonetheless, it is imperative that we select a few measurement organizations to help track our progress.

The three agencies on which we focus are (1) [www.Hospitalcompare.hhs.gov](http://www.Hospitalcompare.hhs.gov), (2) [www.HealthGrades.com](http://www.HealthGrades.com) and (3) [www.ThomsonReuters.com](http://www.ThomsonReuters.com). Each has advantages and disadvantages, but in combination, all help NCH focus on improved quality and patient satisfaction, while providing transparency for others to judge our performance.

- *Hospital Compare* helps us assess our performance relative to state and national benchmarks for patient satisfaction and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid core measures. This service doesn’t address physicians.
- *HealthGrades* is the easiest for a patient to navigate and understand. This service provides ratings and profiles of 5,000 hospitals, 16,000 nursing homes and 750,000 physicians to consumers, corporations, health plans and hospitals.
- *Thomson Reuters* provides the most comprehensive balanced scorecard for improvement, by using 10 metrics covering quality, financial health and patient satisfaction. We’ve recently reviewed where we stand relative to the top 20 large community hospitals on six Thomson Reuters measures—*mortality*, *complications*, *patient safety*, *Medicare and Medicaid core measures*, *30-day mortality*, and *30-day readmission rate*. We are better than the top 20 in two measures, close in two others, and need to improve on the other two parameters. In terms of financial metrics, we do well on *length of stay* and have room to improve relative to *expenses*. The final Thomson Reuters measure is *patient satisfaction* where we are about 11% below the top 20. As you know, patient satisfaction has become a priority focus at NCH as Board Vice Chair, Mrs. **Mariann MacDonald** leads the effort.

The journey to improve that we began a decade ago continues today. We have made significant and gratifying progress over these last 10 years. And with your best efforts, we will continue to improve our performance for many, many more years. My sincere thanks for all that you do for our community.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* and ask anyone to email me at [allen.weiss@nchmd.org](mailto:allen.weiss@nchmd.org) to be added.