

September 30, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

The takeaway from yesterday's meeting of our 24-member Board of Trustees, led by Chairman Joe Perkovich, is that ***“NCH continues to succeed in providing quality healthcare, but that challenges of an uncertain economy still remain.”***

Simply translated, this means that we have continued to bolster the system's financial strength, even as our total admission numbers slightly declined over the past fiscal year. There are many reasons for the drop-off in admissions, including the leveling-off of population in southwest Florida, more outpatient care, and a hopefully healthier community. One of the goals of healthcare reform, of course, is to have better outcomes for patients and not more volume or unnecessary care. So some of the admissions decline might reflect this.

On the “challenge” side of the ledger, there is the issue of waste and inefficiency. Milliman, Inc., a recognized expert on health care quality and value, defines waste or inefficiency in the health care system as *“treatment that is unnecessary, redundant, or ineffective and is contrary to, or not demonstrably associated with, health care quality and outcomes.”* Milliman estimates that the amount of waste in the U. S. health care system exceeds 25 % of total health care spending, or about \$600 billion in 2008.

What are we doing about this at NCH? For one thing, we are striving to remove unnecessary steps as we care for patients. As an example, **Dr. John Lewis**, Co-Director of Team Health and one of our esteemed ER physicians and a Board member, shared with us the recent astounding success of our two Emergency Rooms in getting patients from the front door to the physician.

- Two years ago, it took an ER patient, on average, more than two hours to first see a physician. Last year, through hard work and process redesign, the average waiting time had dropped to 35 minutes. And since mid-summer, though further redesign and even harder work, recent average ER waiting time has reached an all-time low of less than 15 minutes.

That's stupendous work from everyone involved, and proves that we can reduce waste if we put our minds to it. Our challenge is to continue to redesign how we can eliminate waste and improve flow, so that we increase hospital efficiency and improve every patient's experience.

On the plus side, there is our steady climb in quality. CMO **Dr. Aurora Estevez** provided a comprehensive Quality Report update to the Board. One key component of the report—receiving noteworthy endorsement from the Board—was the ratification for pursuing graduate medical education. Having internal medicine residents for three years on both campuses and in outpatient settings will add an element of excitement and continuing education at NCH. We already have a multitude of healthcare students stimulating everyone with their constant and probing questions, so pursuing graduate medical education here is a natural progression. Realistically, it will take about three years to see our first internal medicine residents. In general, the emphasis on quality at NCH helps keep all of us focused on our most critical mission—*taking care of people.*

Our board seemed pleased with our progress, as am I. But we can never be satisfied and must constantly strive to improve. I have great confidence that the knowledge and initiative of all of our committed 3,200 associates will continue to keep us on track as we enhance the delivery of quality healthcare to our friends and neighbors.

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.