

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



October 14, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

NCH was honored last week with an invitation to participate, for the first time in memory, in the southeast Regional Policy Board meeting of the American Hospital Association. It's critical that we learn the best practices of other competent hospital systems so that we can benchmark our progress in serving our community in an environment of changing economic forces and new healthcare mandates.

I was pleased to represent us with about 50 leaders from the southern state hospitals. Predictably, we discussed many of the topics that are top-of-mind here in Naples. Among them:

- *National Quality Strategy*. The strategic questions are all around us. What should hospitals focus on, beyond traditional inpatient care? Should we lead community prevention programs such as fighting obesity, smoking cessation, and cancer prevention? How broad should a hospital system's responsibility extend? Most everyone agreed that our choices should be ambitious, actionable, and aligned.
- *Variation in Spending*. Why do some regions spend almost twice as much as others with no difference in outcomes? Do we have the right incentives for everyone concerned? The apparent answer is, "*No, we don't.*" The fact is that people who take care of themselves with appropriate preventive measures cost the system less. Yet traditional hospital payment mechanisms, such as fee for service, encourage higher volume. Nor have insurance carriers played much of a role in encouraging preventive care until now. All agreed that the goal of a truly accountable health care system is to add value by improving outcomes and decreasing costs, and that there is still much to understand about this complex issue.
- *Physician Leadership and Engagement*. As the nation's 750,000 physicians face new challenges to deliver compassionate, competent care, the theme of "*partnering*" is everywhere. This subject is paramount here at NCH, where we are led by our own committed colleagues, who are reorganizing our community's healthcare to improve patient care.

As we discussed these global topics during the day-and-a half meeting in Atlanta, I was reminded of the real reason NCH was included in such a leadership summit.

- The first reminder came in a 4:27 a.m. email from RN **Brigitte Bennett**, Clinical Coordinator of North Naples ICU. Brigitte wrote about North Collier ICU nurse **Sue Wittman**, who displayed immense compassion with a terminally ill ICU patient. "*Sue had developed a bond with the patient's family and at their request, agreed to stay past her 12-hour shift to give them the emotional support and palliative care that they required. Sue was absolutely wonderful with them, and stayed for 16 hours! I know the family was extremely grateful to our entire staff, but most of all, to Sue. I am so proud to count myself amongst the caring and highly skilled nursing staff employed here at North Collier ICU!*"
- The second reminder came in recalling that last week, **Maria Belanger**, RN from CVRU, floated to our North Collier ICU to care for a patient with us for almost two weeks. Marie doted on this patient, so much so that I overheard her ask if the woman "*would you like a foot massage.*" She did, and Marie made her feel like a queen.

These two examples may seem small in the stress of macro issues swirling around healthcare, but, in fact, the compassionate efforts of people like Sue and Maria are the most important reason why NCH has attained the status it has as a leader in healthcare service and quality.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen".

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 to be added.