

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most

December 9, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

One reason NCH Healthcare is the most well-known and well-respected name in local healthcare is the dedication of our Board of Trustees, the 25 community leaders who volunteer their time to govern our hospital. In the continuing spirit of transparency, here are the highlights from last week's bi-monthly meeting.

- We started with the *Investment Committee's* consideration of refinancing bonds to take advantage of historically low interest rates. We've managed finances well throughout the recession. So today, we're in the enviable position of not needing to borrow more money. Decades ago, we borrowed at higher interest rates, so now we have the wherewithal to refinance at lower rates, and pay down our debt more quickly—a financial position few hospitals enjoy these days.
- In a related context, the *Finance Committee* reviewed this past year's progress. As I've shared with you, NCH remains strong in spite of the region's economic problems and the changing healthcare environment. That's why we were able to reward colleagues with 3% bonus checks in November. Our community has played a huge role in the success of NCH, as philanthropic support has remained strong over the past decade of NCH's growth.
- Our *Governance Committee* then discussed measures to simplify organizational structure. We will consolidate our current 16 committees to become more efficient. Healthcare is complicated enough, so our clear intent remains to avoid adding new layers of governance.
- Finally, the Board heard from our *leadership team* on current activities.

RN Chief Nursing Officer **Michele Thoman** shared progress on patient satisfaction. Key highlights were a 4% improvement in “*overall hospital rating*” and a 7% improvement on “*likelihood to recommend NCH to family and friends.*” Improving patient satisfaction remains a core-critical, ongoing challenge.

Chief Medical Officer **Dr. Aurora Estevez** summarized progress on our *quality* focus. We have “hardwired” our ER and ICU for early recognition and treatment of Sepsis—potentially fatal blood poisoning. We've also reduced infections, due to ventilator-associated pneumonia (none for ten months) or central line-associated blood stream infections, to almost zero. Our goal is zero, with some units having already attained this. We've also improved to 100% since last January in prescribing correct medications at discharge for patients with heart attacks and congestive heart failure. Finally, graduate medical education and use of the computerized provider order entry system are both progressing nicely.

In terms of our substantial and unique “*seasonal flux,*” COO **Phil Dutcher** reported on increased telemetry beds throughout the system, a liaison with area post-acute care facilities for patients who can't go home, and a peak capacity plan for both facilities. Length of stays at NCH is lower (meaning, better) than the state and national average already. By next season, we will add 64 private rooms by completing the 5th and 6th floors at North Naples Campus.

Chairman **Joe Perkovich** led a discussion about physician integration and our intention of supporting, in this changing healthcare environment, the needs and desires of our 630 docs, including independent physicians. Medical Staff President **Dr. Paul Dernbach** then reported the addition of five new members, 28 recent cases of quality peer review, and plans for renovation of the operating rooms at North Naples.

All-in-all, it was a jam-packed meeting day, in keeping with a healthcare system moving aggressively on all fronts. We are blessed by a high-caliber, high-quality team of committed caregivers. Thanks for all you do.

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 to be added.