

November 17, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Among the brightest lights at NCH is our Pediatrics Department, which has flourished in recent years under current Department Chairman Dr. **Todd Vedder** and recent past Chair Dr. **Debbie Shepard**. It's been both amazing and gratifying for me to witness, along with former Department Chairpersons and longtime pediatric stalwarts like Drs. **Barbara Rumberger** and **Ray Duncan**, the progress we've made in caring locally, in a specialized manner, for the 80,000 children 18 and under in Collier and southern Lee County.

At the most recent monthly meeting of the Pediatrics Department, a standing room only crowd listened and learned from one of our newest physicians, Pediatric Emergency Room Director Dr. **Pia Myers**, who shared her vast, practical experience with evidence-based medicine on common problems from fever management and care of fractures to foreign body removal, fall protocols, and other "fun stuff."

Dr. Myers, along with her colleagues Drs. **Ryan Bartruff**, **Jaime Estrada**, **Sobia Najm Masoud**, **Kimberly Nicholson**, **Chuck Nozicka** and **Hsin Yu**, are enjoying the recently-redecorated Pediatric ER at the North Naples Campus, with its comforting and fun beach theme motif, designed to help relax everyone. Plans to expand this Pediatric ER are now being considered as our services and volume increases.

Other staff additions this summer included pediatric gastroenterologist Dr. **Mario Tano**, pediatric pulmonologist Dr. **Kunjana Mavunda** and pediatric cardiologists Drs. **Tankut Onal** and **Levi Novero**. General surgeon Dr. **Joseph Talarico** joined our staff in June adding to our ability to care for kids with common surgical conditions such as appendicitis and abscesses. Drs. **John Churchill**, **Brett Shannon** and **Matthew Wagner** have increased their presence over the past few years to care for children with orthopedic needs. Also, in recent years our anesthesiologists, led by Dr. **Bruce Caldwell**, have provided safe and comfortable anesthesia for the youngest babies up to the "big" kids.

The evolution of NCH Pediatrics started five years ago, when Dr. **Debbie Lopez** and her team of pediatric intensivists and hospitalists joined us. At about the same time, thanks to the generosity of **Robert** and **Mariann MacDonald**, we added the MacDonald Seacarium, a 24-bed dedicated pediatric unit with four ICU rooms. NCH Director **Pat Read** oversaw the entire process of growing the Pediatrics Department to its current formidable state.

Coincident with our pediatric progress, we added 24/7 neonatologists three years ago so that our approximately 3,300 newborn babies per year were assured a doctor in the house, namely the *Birth Place*, to welcome them into this world no matter what their special need. Caring for smaller babies and newborns requiring a respirator (breathing machine) for more than a day can now be done close to home. We will still have some babies with uniquely specialized problems—open heart surgery or neurosurgery needs—going to the nearest specialized pediatric hospital chosen by their parents.

Meanwhile NCH, through Dr. **Vedder**, **Pat Read** and Chief Development Officer **Jim Martin**, has been the backbone of a coalition of 33 community associations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Parks and Recreation, to keep kids healthy and out of the hospital. The *Safe and Healthy Children's Coalition of Collier County* has chosen as its first project, the prevention of drowning in preschool children, the leading cause of death in this age group in Florida. Educating about the dangers of co-sleeping and childhood obesity are efforts planned by this important coalition, dedicated to improving the lives of Collier County's most important resource, our children.

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.